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[DEAD.]

## THE LOST CORONET.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"One Sparkle of Gold," "Evelyn's Plot," &c., &c.

### CHAPTER XIV.

I'll love no more those cruel eyes of hers,  
Which, pleased or angered, still are murderous;  
For if she dart, like lightnings through the air,  
Her beams of wrath she kills me with despair,  
Or surfeit with excess of joy I die.

"EXQUISITE! the very perfection of melody!" exclaimed Lord Hartford, carelessly lounging over Estelle's chair as she finished the air which had been promised as an especial favour on the previous night. "The words are a great deal more passionate and earnest than the carelessly written librettos generally contain. I quite agree with them, don't you, Oliphant?" he added, turning to Lord Quentin, who had come into the music-room during the song unperceived by Estelle, and now stood behind the shade of the heavy curtain with a sullen frown on his handsome features.

Lady Mont Sorell started involuntarily at the sudden indication of her lover's presence. Even her proud indifference was scarcely proof against the bitter indignation she read in his face and tone as he advanced coldly towards her.

"I need scarcely inquire respecting your health, Lady Mont Sorell; you are of course in brilliant condition, to judge from the exertions you are so superfluously making."

"But perhaps I may inquire how you entered in so ghostlike a fashion," returned Estelle, coldly. "I am not fond of such unceremonious proceedings even from friends."

"Pardon me, Lady Mont Sorell; I was duly announced at the drawing-room door, but Lady Claud is reposing on her sofa and did not observe my entrance, and I presumed I could not be intruding where there could be no private conversation," returned Lord Quentin, with well nigh as haughty an air as her own.

"That assertion may be open to question in some

cases, Oliphant," interposed the marquis, laughingly. "I maintain that there can be no words half so significant of hidden sentiment as a convenient song, such as the one Lady Mont Sorell has just interpreted so splendidly. Don't you agree with it?" he added, with a covert smile.

"With the assertion or the song, marquis?" returned Quentin, coldly.

"Both if you like; but at the moment I alluded to the sentiment of the words, that no second love could ever be worth a thought. As well have a second-hand *entrée* as a warmed-up heart; is it not so, Lady Mont Sorell?"

Estelle flushed uneasily.

"It depends upon what you mean by a second love, my lord," she replied, with a constrained smile. "Surely it is very possible for persons to mistake a mere fancy for love, or else to have been led into some entanglement very much against their real inclination."

Lord Hartford shrugged his shoulders.

"I am bound to submit to such a fair and competent judge," he said, half cynically; "but I confess I should feel excessively doubtful in such a case whether the 'mistake' might not be repeated to my own damage. I for one do not think I could ever marry any woman who had been engaged before, nor, if I knew it, had even been guilty of a serious flirtation."

Estelle's hand trembled as she busied herself with some music as the marquis spoke, and the songs she was arranging fell on the floor, thus giving her a convenient opportunity for stooping so low as to conceal the irrepressible rush of warm blood to her cheeks, and to give a pretext for the deepened colour when she raised her head.

"Does your rule apply to your own sex, my lord?" she asked, with a significant glance at Quentin Oliphant. "Are we damsels to demand a solemn declaration that our lovers never even believed a woman fair or good till they beheld our peerless selves?"

But Lord Hartford did not reply. His eyes were bent on the floor attentively at the moment, and as she finished her playful query he stooped forward

and picked up a glittering object from its concealment among a heap of scattered music and books.

"I presume this is your property, Lady Mont Sorell," he said, displaying a delicately worked chain and cross in his uplifted hand. "Excuse my detaining it for a moment," he added, gazing curiously at its rare beauty of workmanship and material, "but it is a most uncommon jewel. I never but once saw one like it, and that was brought from India by an old friend as a token of especial regard from some chief's daughter whose life he had saved, and this is most singularly like it."

"There is no accounting for such coincidences, my lord," said the girl, haughtily, extending her hand for the trinket. "I presume the pattern is not instantly destroyed when one of such baubles is finished, though I have heard of such specialities in lace work. May I ask you for my property? I assure you it is not stolen," she added, bitterly smiling as she received the trifle from the marquis and slightly returned his profound bow.

"There can be no doubt it is valued, at any rate," he returned, carelessly; "such treasures may fairly be termed 'bosom concealments,' eh, Oliphant?"

"May not I have a glimpse of so curious a trinket?" asked Lord Quentin, eagerly.

"Excuse me, my lord. I have no fancy for a minute criticism of my property," she returned, coldly. "As to the value I attach to it, there is a very simple explanation to be given if I thought I owed any such excuses to Lord Hartford and yourself," and, hastily concealing the chain in her dress, she retreated into the adjoining saloon.

"An heiress is privileged, I suppose, or I might, perhaps, punish the fair countess for her pretty impertinence," laughed the marquis, carelessly, as he followed in the wake of the girl's steps.

But Quentin did not even catch the words. His attention was fixed on a tiny knot of hair that lay on the chair from which Estelle had risen, and ere he joined the little group in the next room the small but glossy knot, with its miniature gold letters pressed on its braid, was secured in his own note case.

"Addio, Lady Mont Sorell," the marquis was laughingly ejaculating as he passed into the saloon, "or rather au revoir, for I presume we shall meet to-night at the opera, and the 'Magic Flute' will efface the image of the 'magic chain'."

He raised her hand to his lips, but without touching it as he spoke, and the next instant, with a low bow to the languid, half-dozing Lady Claud, he had gone.

Estelle and Lord Quentin were virtually alone, and for a few moments there was stillness in the spacious saloon.

The girl played carelessly with a piece of fairy-like netting that lay on the table, and Quentin gazed in sullen silence on her white fingers and downcast eyes. Then Quentin at last broke the almost oppressive quietude of the apartment.

"Estelle."

No answer.

"Estelle, will you not reply? Will you not cease the pain that is torturing me?"

"I really cannot sympathize with what I do not even comprehend," she answered, haughtily. "I do not at all see what claim you can have on me to pity you for self torment; and perhaps I in my turn may request a little respect for me and my guests if you wish to preserve the *entrée* to my saloons, Lord Quentin."

"This from you, Estelle!" he returned, passionately. "Take care that you do not push your power too far, lest the 'chain' snap. Ah! that word brings the flush once again to your cheek, my proud countess," he continued, bitterly. "Estelle, I demand an explanation of the mystery of that trinket."

"Demand!" she repeated, scornfully. "Demand! That is a strange word for you to use, my lord, and one I will neither acknowledge nor tolerate. What right have you to pry into my affairs, my inner life? It is not my pleasure to satisfy you. That is my reply."

"What right have I!" he repeated, bitterly. "I will soon prove that, Estelle De Vecci. Yes, that name which is growing unfamiliar to the proud countess may perhaps recall a little of the past. You may remember your blandishments, your veiled assurances of preference and love, your skillful wiles to separate me from that unhappy, gentle girl, your understood pledge to be mine if my bond with her were broken. Estelle, you dare not deny this, you dare not retract your promise; and as you betrothed husband I insist on your explaining the suspicious circumstances against you."

The girl drew up her proud head haughtily to its utmost height.

"Lord Quentin, I brook no such insults as you have heaped on me from any man, even were your assumptions true and my heart's whole happiness dependent on your condescending to preserve your troth. It seems to me that there is no such mighty obligation on my side as you appear to suppose. The Countess of Mont Sorell need scarcely fear being left to pine for even the peerless Lord Quentin Oliphant."

"I know, I know," he replied, vehemently. "I perfectly understand that there are plenty of gold worshippers who will bow at your shrine, Estelle; but I warn you that you will find misery and ruin in listening to such false vows. And I for one will not sit down tamely under my injuries. Even now I have that in my possession that would alone be conclusive proof of your falsehood, Estelle."

She paled involuntarily, and her fingers sought for the precious trinket restlessly in her bosom.

"You are false," she said. "I am not so easily deceived by empty vanities. I defy you, Lord Quentin, if you choose to throw down the gauntlet. You cannot tarnish my fair name, nor say one word that could injure me without danger to yourself."

"Are you sure of that, proud girl?" he returned, sternly. "Are you quite certain that I may not have some fatal proof in my keeping, even though that bauble is close to your heart? Look well before you decide. I fancy there may be something wanting, perhaps a precious curl from a coxcomb's head, and two significant letters as an identification of the owner. Did you never hear of such things in your experience?"

He pronounced these words with a bitter and deliberate emphasis that at once tortured and tantalized the expectant, eager listener. When he spoke the last significant sentence in a low, hoarse tone of warning Estelle barely suppressed a faint cry of dismay; but the next moment she recovered her courage.

"I am absurdly nerveless," she said, "and you are worse than insolent to invent such fables. Suppose you are correct, and have been guilty of stealing a lock of hair I value as belonging to a dear and absent friend—what then? Would any one credit such a wild tale from such simple and natural premises? Lord Quentin, you must be frenzied with jealous folly to make such a childish threat."

"And you, Estelle, are white and trembling with

fear, nevertheless," he answered, bitterly. "Be assured I am no despicable enemy, though I am your true and devoted lover if you are wise enough to secure me as a friend. Will you be candid with me, Estelle? I demand an answer as my right, yet if you reply falsely it would be worse than silence. Who gave you that trinket?"

She was silent for a while. There was something in his eyes that she had never seen there before—a stern, unyielding hardness which spoke dangerously for the future if she provoked him.

"Quentin, you are cruel, unjust," she returned, plaintively. "Surely I may be allowed to retain a girlish keepsake without any such rigid catechism. Can you not trust me more than this?" she added, with a winning sweetness in her dark eyes. "I might well doubt you, whom I saw so lately at the feet of another."

"Yes, and read my heart like an open book during that passing fancy," he returned, proudly. "I had scarcely felt the chain ere it began to gall, and I longed to burst it, to fly to you, Estelle, long before you had aught but your own charms to draw me to your side. But this is idle recrimination. Once more I ask you, where did you get that bauble, and why is it so cherished?"

Her face changed once more, like an April sky. She smiled with eyes and lips, as if sunshine burst from the cloud that had shadowed them.

"Foolish Quentin, to stir up my woman's pride so needlessly, and give me such useless torment. I would have satisfied you at once if you had not been so imperious in your demands. The bauble, as you call it, was a parting gift from a school friend, now in India, and bestowed under a promise that I would wear it constantly. Now you see the little wee mouse, springing out of your black mountain, most terrible of all Bluebeards."

Quentin gazed doubtfully in her face; but it only smiled sadly, in a bewitching frankness, that might well dispel any lingering suspicion.

"Estelle, be noble, be merciful," he said, hoarsely. "You know not what hangs on your truth. I love you with no light, passing affection. You are my very life's sun, and if it set in darkness it shall not leave me in black despair solely. I will not be miserable alone, Estelle—and both you and a successful rival will rue the day when you betray my trust."

A cold shiver ran through the girl's veins at the words. There was a awfully sudden solemnity in their tone that almost brought a blush of the grave in its utterance; and it was with a desperate effort at self-mastery that she replied, calmly:

"You have a strange fit over you to-day, Quentin, but I suppose I must humour it. There, be content; I shall no more marry the donor of that foolish trinket than I shall my own mother. Will that satisfy you? and this?" she added, bending down and pressing her lips on his forehead, while her white arm lightly encircled his neck.

The caress was electrical. He clasped the lovely form in his arms with a convulsive tenderness.

"Beloved, beautiful Estelle, you are but too powerful, too entrancing," he murmured, passionately. "But, oh, dearest, remember that the most fiery love is the element of the most unquenchable and relentless hate if its trust is betrayed and flung back on itself like the lava of a boiling volcano."

Estelle's heart throbbed with vague fear as tumultuously as with love against her lover's bosom.

#### CHAPTER XV.

How wonderful is Death,  
Death and his brother Sleep;  
One pale as yonder waning moon,  
With lips of livid blue.

RASHLEIGH FRESHFIELD had lain motionless and insensible for more than an hour ere his absent attendant returned from his mission.

The thunder had pealed, the lightning flashed luridly on his fleshless face, and still no rolling roar of clouds, no dazzling gleam, woke him from his trance.

In the very midst of the furious tempest there was once again a darkening of the glass portal, a gliding, noiseless step past the silent form in that cushioned chair, and a hand quickly and daringly placed within the clothes of its shrunken, motionless tenant for a brief instant.

Then the visitant passed on, and for some quarter of an hour was buried in the recesses of the apartment where no mortal eye scanned his movements. Again he returned, and once more placed his heavy fingers within the loose attire of the invalid. This time his touch was less dextrous, or the stunned man's senses were revived from the shock they had received.

Mr. Freshfield drew a long breath, gasped, his eyes opened with a wild, unrecognized stare on his rude companion, and his bony fingers grasped the hand within his garments.

The intruder started back from the ghastly touch of the fleshless, hard fingers with a strange terror, but he could not cast them off. They clung to his like a spectre's clasp, which he could only free himself from by a dangerous violence. He fancied that a gate swung to, and footsteps sounded in the distance.

There was not a moment to be lost. He felt with his disengaged hand in his vest for an instant.

There was not a sound, not a moan, but his hand flashed over the feeble frame, then he sped away like a hunted fox from the spot.

Scarcely had the faint rustle of his flight died away on the heavy air when firmer and more decided steps came tramping on the gravel path, and in a few moments Perkins, hat in hand, stood at the open window of the apartment.

"Please, sir," he began, in his usual formal, drilled style, "I—"

But the next moment the words clove on his tongue, and he stood gazing at the figure, before him with open mouth and glazed eyes.

"Merciful Heaven!" he gasped. "He is murdered!"

In truth, a faint, thin stream of blood trickled down from the veined temple, that drained the life springs from those collapsed arteries, and still the feeble pulses of the heart, ere it well reached the ground on which it fell in ghastly stains.

Perkins remained for a few seconds paralyzed by the shock.

Then he sprang to the bell, and gave a peal that would have roused the numbbed senses of a yet more obtuse ear than the ancient housekeeper's.

Then he returned to the unconscious master, whom he had so recently left in all the possession of life that had been his for many a long month and year, and strove to staunch the slow blood-pour, and to save, if possible, the flickering spark that lingered in the worn frame.

But in vain. The temples were bathed, the dress loosened, the parched lips moistened by the domestic's utmost skill, and still brought no sign of returning life.

Then came the old routine that must be gone through in all such tragedies. The doctor's advent and inevitable verdict of hopeless injury if not actually departed life.

There was but one duty for the survivors remaining, to avenge the death, to discover the criminal, and to carry out the wishes, expressed or understood, of the unfortunate Rashleigh Freshfield, the lonely descendant of a singular and, as it appeared, doomed race.

Who had done the deed which had hastened the coming and that stern spirit and frail body? That was the first question that rose to the lips of the horrified group as they once again returned to the apartment where the crime had been committed after paying the last adieu to the victim.

"Who is the unfortunate gentleman's next heir?" asked Doctor Skelton, in reply to Perkins's despairing exclamation. "He should be at once communicated with, and due notice also given to the police without delay. Indeed I am not sure that we have done right in taking any steps."

"Well, sir, you see that my poor master was a very singular man," replied Perkins. "And having always lived a bachelor made him more morose and reserved than he might have been. Then he had a great vexation, I believe, in the only relative I ever knew anything about, his nephew, sir, the orphan of his brother; he took him from a boy, but I fancy he must have offended master mortally, for he never would so much as hear his name mentioned in his presence. Mr. Jonas went wild, I suppose, but I know no more than you do about the circumstances of the quarrel, sir."

"Where is this nephew now?" asked Doctor Skelton, musingly.

"Can't tell, sir. Haven't seen or heard of him ever since I was in the house, and I have been with my master for more than five years, ever since he was taken with his last illness, sir."

"And his lawyer? Surely he has one," exclaimed the physician, sharply.

"The lawyer who drew up his will, sir, was quite a young man—not the one that he used to employ when he was in business. It was a Mr. Brereton, Stanley Brereton. I know that was his name, for I took in his card when he came down. There was a great fuss about getting witnesses to the signing, for they said that neither Janet nor I would do. And they fetched the curate, who's dead now, by the way, and the man who looked after the garden, and they witnessed the will. That was not more than a year since, I should say, when the doctor from London gave up my master for good, or rather for bad, as you may say."

"Then the only way will be to send to this same Mr. Brereton, who probably has the will in his own possession," returned Doctor Skelton, after a pause.



"And, meanwhile, I shall take on myself, with your help, Perkins, to seal up all the repositories of the late Mr. Freshfield, then place the house under the surveillance of the police till proper persons can be found to take the affair in hand. It is more satisfactory for all of us," he added, seeing the domestic's blank look of annoyance.

"Well, yes, sir, I daresay, only I have certainly been trusted by my master ever since I've been here, and had a great deal to put up with, I can tell you, sir. But of course you know best."

"Certainly, my good fellow," said the doctor, kindly. "Depend upon it I have your interests more at heart than any one's in doing what I propose. It would be an unpleasantly awkward business if anything were missing, you see, when a search is made, unless we had proof that all remained as it was left at the time of the death."

Somewhat softened by this explanation, the frate domestic proceeded to carry out the doctor's suggestions. And, under his guidance, Doctor Skelton visited each apartment where the deceased gentleman was likely to have any of his peculiar belongings, and affixed his own large seal-ring stamp to each cabinet and drawer ere he departed on his next mission.

"And, doctor, I'd prefer that you should look into my room, and old Janet's, before you go," said Perkins, loftily. "We must not have our good name taken away, any how, sir, for other folks' sins," and, with a half-smile, despite the gravity of the occasion, the physician complied, and certified by his own observation that there was a complete absence of the slightest breach of the Eighth Commandment in the humbly furnished rooms.

Doctor Skelton departed with a frank assurance to Perkins's troubled mind that he held him perfectly above suspicion in the matter, and would testify accordingly at the proper time.

It might be that the servant's penetration was quickened by the doctor's hint, or that the natural fever of excitement gave a restless activity to his brain, for the moment the last sound of the doctor's carriage wheels died away he left the apartment where the dialogue had been held, and proceeded to examine the whole approach to the house with the keen eagerness of an amateur detective. Every inch of the gravel path was carefully inspected. Then, with a grin of evident satisfaction, the domestic fetched a bit of string and took the measurement of some marks that his keen gaze had discovered in the damp soil beneath the windows.

Then he returned to the room where the crime had been committed, and, going down on his hands and knees, passed his fingers slowly over the surface of the carpet, up to the very wall within which the window was fixed.

The thick woollen mat was almost a baffling impediment to the search. But Perkins loosened it from its hold on the rich, double-piled carpet, and shook it slowly and cautiously on the soft lining of the floor.

The thick Axminster was a baffling impediment to any sound, but Perkins's sharp eyes detected the fall of a small object from the entangling web of the long soft loops.

He darted on it like a bird seizing some luckless insect as its prey. He held it up to the light, examined it carefully, and detected in it some finely cut initials, that are rarely carved on so ordinary an appendage as the fanciful charm belonging to a watch chain.

But Perkins could read the tiny characters by his still keen and sharpened sight. And a half-triumphant, half-doubtful smile passed over his lips as he examined the trifling bauble.

"What shall I do?" he muttered. "Is it for me to play detective after the doctor's insolent hint? I don't suppose I shall do myself any good by meddling in the matter if I'm all right, as I expect, under the will. Yes, yes, I know a trick worth two of that after all. I may keep a clear conscience and receive what is my due, for, after all, what can any one object to my gaining the wages of a quiet tongue and cool brain? Yes, yes. David Perkins was not born yesterday, and if a man can make a mixture that's neither good nor bad, and will sell well, I can't see why he shouldn't get it into the best market."

And with this commercial axiom Mr. David Perkins completed his deliberate survey, and carefully hid the treasure trove in the innermost recess of his dress before he closed the door of the ill-fated room and repaired to the more canny regions where his compeer Mrs. Janet Gellatly held sway.

"You must be ready to give your say, Janet," he observed when he joined the ancient dame. "I think you'd do well to give me a foreshadowing of what is in your mind to tell the bobbies when they arrive. Did you see or hear aught? I don't mean like you told the speering doctor, but as you'd say to an old friend like me. It's a deep mystery, Janet, and if

we don't hold together there's no telling the end o' it for either of us."

Janet looked cautiously at him.

"I suppose you're no' castin' up the blame on me, Davie," she replied, with a contemptuous sneer. "Because if you're so mean and fauble a mon I'll maybe say something what doesn't suit your fancies, Master Perkins."

"Tut, tut, woman, you're daft," he said. "Why, I was off to Walford at three o'clock and back again by half past six, and I can give an account of my time that would save a man at the very foot of the gallows. You're no goin' to cast the crime on me, I'm thinkin'."

The old woman laughed.

"You're a cautious chiel, Davie Perkins, but ye need not trouble yourself as to that. Still, if the truth must be spoken, I did hear a step on the gravel path, and I fancied you had come back, Davie, mair by token that there were voices as I thought in the room. But it's as well to keep a quiet tongue in one's mouth, and I'll not say more than the questions they speer at me."

David mused for a few moments ere he replied.

"Far be it from me to stop you from your lawful duty, Janet. Just say what is in your conscience, and no more, mind you, or you may rue the day. But, for the rest, it's a bad business, and one that won't be ended for a while, I expect; and the poor master that's gone won't, maybe, pass from our minds in a hurry."

The cautious domestic applied his handkerchief to his eyes, perhaps as a safe veil to the features which might express something less easily comprehended than tears.

#### CHAPTER XVI.

Not unless Heaven made sharp thine ear  
With sorrow such as mine,  
Out of that delicate lay couldst thou  
Its heavy tale divine.

"CHILD, what are you about? Haven't you got anything for me to eat or drink?" growled Nicholas Lovatt, entering his humble sitting-room with a brow that was even more than usually contracted and morose.

Pauline hastily rose from her work at the harsh comment.

"I did not expect you till night, father," she said, gently, "and I am afraid there is not much in the"—house, she was going to add, but the bitter mockery of the term struck her and fancy ere she uttered it, and she changed it to "cupboard."

"Then I suppose you have had a pretty good feast yourself, girl," was the harsh rejoinder. "What's more," he added, angrily, "I don't choose you should keep account of the exact time I go out and come in, as if you were a schoolmistress, or a scolding wife. D'ye understand?"

"I never intended to do so, father," was the soft, sad reply.

"That's well—at least, if you're honest. Now just see what there is in the pot. I've not tasted food since morning, and I'm famishing."

The girl hastened to obey the behest.

How strange to see those delicate, fair hands lifting from the rude ladder the sole viands it contained and spreading them on a cloth that at least had the merit of being clean and whole. There was some bread, a piece of dark, untempting cheese, and a morsel of white, lard-like butter; then she produced some eggs that had at least the appearance of being fresh in their clear shells.

"Shall I boil you some of these for your supper?" she asked, gently.

"Yes; and I want some beer and rum. I suppose you're too dainty to go and fetch them, so I'll get them myself while you're cooking the young chicks. There give me a jug and a bottle."

With this attempt at a jest, the man hurried downstairs, and soon returned with the foaming malt liquor in the blue tankard, and a far more pernicious liquor in the bottle Pauline had quickly handed to him.

She had learned to endure in silence, though as yet all seemed like a hideous dream to her stunned brain.

She could scarcely comprehend the terrible contrast, scarcely realize that she—the household drudge, the enslaved daughter, the tenant of the humble apartments kept neat and clean by her own hands—should be identical with the petted, worshipped heiress of the De Vesicis—the mistress of splendid mansions, waited on at a mere glance by a crowd of accomplished and zealous domestics.

Yet, poor girl, if she could but have seen her own fair, delicate form and exquisite features as she performed those strange, menial offices she would scarcely have doubted the truth of her own history.

Never perhaps—even in that last memorable hour of her heiress life, when, arrayed in utmost splendour and surrounded by illustrious companions, she had

stood in the presence chamber of royalty—never even at that height of luxury and elegance had she looked so completely the refined, pure, elevated child of a higher sphere than when clad in the simplest apparel, and performing the humblest duty for a coarse, tyrant father. She moved like an angel of light in that repulsive, dark chamber.

Nicholas had thrown himself on the large Windsor chair that was his ordinary seat, while she finished the preparations for his meal. There was a sullen gloom over his whole face and manner that attracted Pauline's attention, albeit too well accustomed to the capricious and morose humour which he was never at the pains in any emergency to restrain.

"Are you not well, father?" she asked, timidly, as she placed the eggs before him with the quiet grace of an attendant experienced in such service.

"Well? Of course I am! Don't flatter yourself I'm going off the hooks, Miss Pauline," he said, with a forced laugh. "You're not going to get rid of me in such a hurry, I can tell you. No, no," he added, more lightly; "it's only that I'm rather hard up, child—that is, I want cash in plain English. Have you got any?"

"None," she replied, sadly; "how could I have, father? I have no means of getting money now. What is to be done?" she added as the new and unknown terror rose up before her inexperienced mind. "Are you quite—I mean have not you any money, father?"

"Never mind. I only want to show you what will be the consequence if you are obstinate," he resumed, harshly. "The truth is I cannot have you as a burden on me, when I've scarcely enough to keep myself, and you must either marry Jonas at once or try and earn something on your own account. Of course it's only a matter of sooner or later," he added, sternly. "I'm resolved that you shall be the wife of Jonas Dawes before six months are out; but in the meantime your grand schooling ought to fetch something, as I don't doubt it cost a pretty penny. What can you do, child?"

Pauline's heart beat tumultuously, like that of a bird about to be turned out on the cold world among a crowd of wild and fierce comrades.

"I do not know," she stammered, faintly. "I daresay I could teach, but I never tried, and it would need a reference in a lady's family."

"A character I suppose you mean. Well I should think that crying lady who pretended to be so fond of you would manage that if it came to the worst," he answered, coarsely. "But that would not suit my book, child. I don't mean you to get out of my safe keeping by going out as a governess where 'no followers are admitted.' That would not do for Jonas or me either. But you're not ugly, and I suppose you can sing. I daresay you'd earn a pretty penny by going out at nights and singing in public. I know several places where such a girl as you would be engaged. You see, Pauline," he continued, with a confidential tone new to him where she was concerned, "I want to get away from here and take a nice place, where you'd be as happy as a bird till you're married, and from which you could go creditably to your husband. Do you see, my girl?"

There was an unnatural glare in his eyes and a forced jollity in his tone as he spoke the last words that struck on Pauline's heart with a terror more vague and alarming than the actual threats which they implied.

She had never known him hint the slightest discontent with his lodging before, still less the ambitions for so different a mode of life; and a dark suspicion that something which she could not even shadow to herself had happened to work the change struck a chill more appalling than more tangible danger.

"Father, I will do anything in my power to help you," she replied, "but I cannot sing in public; no, not even at your command. It would be too dreadful, too degrading."

"Hoity, toity! What! you could sing before a whole mob of fashionables without a blush, and can't bring yourself to earn an honest living for yourself and your father by doing the same thing to honest folk. Is that it, young woman? But we'll see who's master. I tell you I will have money, and I've no means of getting any just now except through you, chit that you are."

"I can work, I can draw. I will try and sell some things of my own making," she said, pleadingly. "Will not that do instead? I would not mind so much going to a shop with my work as that dreadful exposure you talk of."

"Child, will you promise me to marry Jonas Dawes when he is ready for you? If so, I will let you off for this once on your own terms," he returned, averting his eyes from her tearful, pleading face.

There was a pause, a terrible struggle perhaps in the mind of that young and defenceless girl. It was possible for her to avert present misery by a promise

that could afterwards be broken, or by the various chances of time never claimed.

She gazed at her father's stern, harsh face, she even fancied she could see his clenched hand, that might be upraised in his present gloomy mood. Still her true, brave spirit did not quail or stoop to the falsehood that would stain and degrade her in far deeper abasement than that fearful fall which had brought her low but left her innocent.

"No, father," she said, firmly, "I cannot promise. I will work for you, wait on you, never desert you in sorrow or illness or danger, as becomes a child to a parent, but I will not utter perjury, and I will not risk the fearful degradation of the life you propose for me. Father, think of my mother in her youthful days, when you loved and first brought her to your home. Would you have borne to see her gazed at, insulted by a rude crowd? If I am her child, for her sake be merciful."

His features worked convulsively as the girl uttered these pleadings in her sweet, musical tones. But the last words appeared to lash him again to fury.

"If!" he said, fiercely—"If! Girl, do you mean to say that I have spoken falsely? It is very fine talking of your duty and your honour, forsooth, then dare to tell your own father he has committed perjury! That's one way of begging certainly to insult me in my own house. I've a great mind to prove you're my child by a little token you won't forget in a hurry."

He lifted his heavy hand menacingly at the fragile creature before him.

Was it her gentle, brave aspect—neither cowering before nor shrinking from the cowardly threat—that made the limb tremble and fall with a sort of sudden powerlessness at his side? Or did his eyes rest on some tell-tale mark on his half-bared arm that blanched for a moment even his bronzed cheeks and lowered his blazing eyes?

Who could tell the workings of that ungoverned, fierce spirit, debased and hardened as it was by a long course of evil companionship and soured hopes?

"Come, don't look so scared, child," he said, with an effort at a smile. "I'm not going to hurt you, though you are enough to exasperate a man by your finical nonsense, and I'm not in the best of humours to-night. There, I'll give you a little more time to come to your senses if you keep your word and earn enough money to get us out of this house. What's more, child, you must, for it is necessary we should be off, and for many reasons I don't want to try to raise it among my chums. D'ye hear me, Pauline?" he added as the girl still remained still and motionless on her knees before him.

She rose up with a sort of white, dreamy horror over her face that yet did not vent itself in words, for she simply replied to the rough query:

"Yes, I will try. I will begin at once."

"Then be off now, and go to your bed," he said, quickly, as steps came slowly up the stairs. "That's Jonas, I hear, and I've a word to say to him in private."

Pauline slowly obeyed.

She removed the small table on which the frugal supper had been laid, and threw a cloth over its viands still remaining.

Then she bent down with a shudder in obedience to her father's beckoning gesture, and touched his forehead with her lips as she bade him good-night.

She encountered Jonas Dawes as she hurried from the room, but without aught but a slight inclination of the head she rushed passed him, and locked herself in her own little chamber ere the door heavily closed behind his entrance into the other apartment.

Then, sinking on her low couch, she clasped her hands in uncontrollable agitation, and her lips parted as it were involuntarily with the words:

"Oh, mercy, mercy! It cannot be! It is too dreadful—even for him!"

(To be continued.)

**THE EARTHQUAKE ON THE PACIFIC COAST.**—Despatches dated San Francisco, March 23, state that advices from the volcanic country north of the Mojave river show that the earthquake of the 26th was felt there. It was of terrific force. At Lone Pine twenty-three people were killed. The shocks were felt at intervals for thirty hours, creating immense consternation. Fifty houses were wholly demolished, and the town is in ruins. Despatches from Genoa, Nevada, dated March 28, say that Camp Independence, Inyo County, California, is in complete ruins, the earthquake having been most severe in that region. Not a single abode or any brick building is standing from Bishop Creek to Independence. Fears are entertained for other mining camps farther south in the Sierras. Mrs. West, residing near Independence, was seriously injured, and her child was killed. Stage passengers report

several fissures miles in length, and 50 to 200 feet wide and 20 feet deep, along the eastern base of the Sierra Nevada, near Big Pine Camp. At other places in the vicinity the ground is torn up in great ridges. Large springs have stopped running, and others have broken out. Heavy snow slides occurred on the Sierras, and large rocks rolled down the mountain sides, blocking up the stage road. The shocks lasted, at intervals, from 2:30 to 6:30 a.m. Many people at Independence were hurt, but no lives were lost.

#### OVER THE BAR.

HOARSE on the brooding stillness—

The pause we feel and hear,

Like the hush of Nature's warning,

When the holy Night draws near—

Beats a muffled roar of traffic,

A thunder of hoof and wheel,

Through which the mellow minor chords

Of human voices steal;

Far over the twinkling roofs and shoals,

Wrapt low in the dying Day,

Past the drowsy star on the harbour bar,

And on to the tumbling gray

Of the limitless lonely waters,

And the Night's infinity,

Wander the Babel echoes

Of the city beside the sea.

I rock with the rocking billow,

Far out on the tide afloat,

And the cool white arms of the sea unfold

And girdle my little boat;

With treacherous lips she kisses

The listless hand I lay

On her emerald braided tresses,

Shot through with the gold of Day—

Shot through with the golden arrows

That fell from the sinking sun,

When the dim West glowed in her god's

embrace,

And their trust, like a dream, was done.

And so the sad Day leaves me

Adrift on the tide afar,

And the beautiful Night hath found me

Where I rock on the moaning bar,

And leaning out of her silver doors

Smiles down in a kindling star.

I float with the idle seaweed,

A waif of the wandering sea,

Alone in the waste of waters

And the Night's infinity,

Till the World, with its griefs and clamour,

Drops low in the mist a-lee. E. A. B.

#### SCIENCE.

**ORE RAISED FROM THE VEINS.**—From the veins of Gilpin county, Colorado, alone nearly 600 tons of ore are raised daily, or a total of 180,000 tons annually. Nearly 500 lodes have been assayed or mapped in a circle of three miles in diameter; fully a thousand lodes have been recorded, and more or less work performed upon each. From fifteen to twenty miles of reputable lodes are known to exist, upon which there is not less than eight miles of shafting, the deepest shaft going eight hundred feet into the bowels of the earth. There is not less than twenty miles of drifting on these veins, following the ore deposit in the crevices. The assays of the territorial assayer amount to thousands, from samples of these leads. Averaging three hundred of these assays, samples of mill ore alone, taken as they were set down in the official register one year ago, would show this species of ore to be worth nearly 10¢ per ton.

#### MUD AND AIR VOLCANOES.

Mud volcanoes extend over a large area of the globe. The most remarkable assemblage of mud volcanoes in the world exists in the district of Lays, lying on the south-east corner of Baloochistan. The cone of one of them is no less than 400 ft. high, and the crater at the top is 90 ft. in diameter. The mud in the crater is quite liquid, and is constantly disturbed by bubbles of gas, and occasionally by jets of the mud itself.

More familiarly known is the mud volcano of Macaluba, near Girgenti, in Sicily. It is situated in a country much impregnated with sulphur and other inflammable matters. The tops of the hills are covered with dry clay, in which are numerous basins full of warmish water, mixed with mud and bitumen from the small craters. Bubbles of gas arise from time to time; but at long intervals they become much more active, and throw up jets of wet mud to the height of 200 ft.

In the Peninsula of Taman, near the entrance to the Sea of Azof, there is a group of mud volcanoes, from one of which there was a considerable eruption on the 27th February, 1793. It was predicted by

underground detonations, and accompanied by a column of fire and dense vapour, which rose to the height of several hundred feet. The discharge of gas and mud was abundant; the accompaniment of fire and smoke makes this eruption more nearly resemble that of a true volcano.

There is, in the adjacent parts of the Crimea, a mountain named Korabotoff, which also presents similar phenomena. On the 6th of August, 1856, if I am right, a column of fire and smoke was seen to rise from the top of this mountain to a great height, and it continued for five or six weeks; two other similar but less violent ejections of fire and smoke followed at short intervals. These appearances were the accompaniment of an eruption of black fetid mud, which overspread the ground at the foot of the mountain to a considerable depth.

A more striking phenomenon occurred in the Sea of Azof on May 10, 1814. On the day named a column of flame and very thick smoke arose out of the water with a loud report like that of a cannon, and masses of earth with large stones were tossed up in the air. Ten eruptions of this kind succeeded each other at intervals of about a quarter of an hour, and after they had ceased for a time they began again during night. Next morning it was found that an island had arisen out of the sea between 9 and 10 ft. high, surrounded by a lower level of hardened mud; a strong fetid smell (probably that of petroleum) proceeded from the new island, and extended to a considerable distance.

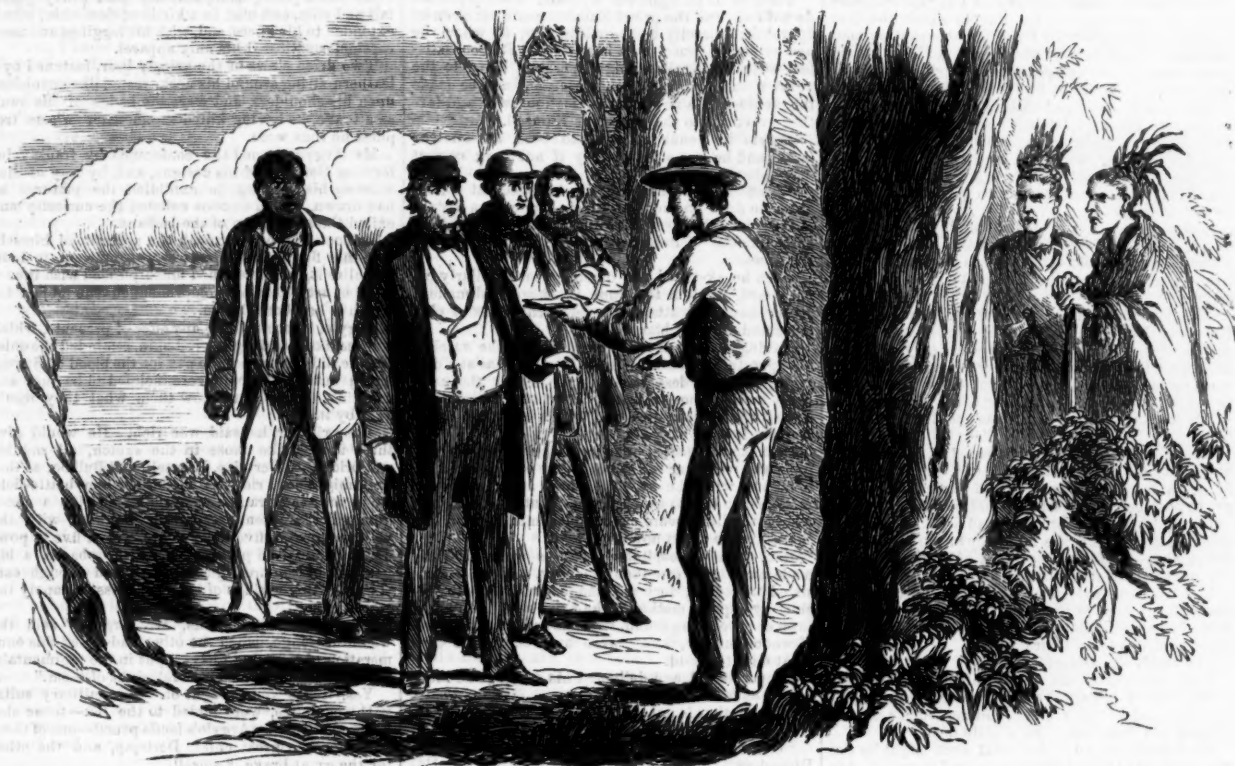
Another mud volcano, named Jokmall, near the Caspian Sea, was formed in November, 1827. In this case the ejection of mud was, for several hours, preceded by flames rising to so great a height that they could be seen at the distance of twenty-four miles. Large pieces of rocks were at the same time thrown up and scattered to considerable distances all round. The entire district in which this mountain is situated has its soil copiously impregnated with petroleum, and numerous wells are formed for its collection. Quantities of this mineral oil are frequently found floating on the sea along the neighbouring shores, where the sailors are in the habit of setting fire to this floating petroleum, dextrously steering their boats so as to avoid the flames. In this district, also, stands the city of Bakn, held sacred by the Parsees, or fire-worshippers, who have built a temple, in which are kept burning perpetual fires, fed by the naphtha springing from the ground. During the year 1866 a small mud volcano was formed on the flank of Mount Etna; it began with an outburst of strong jets of boiling water. First one rose to the height of 6 ft., then several others broke out, whereupon the height of the whole diminished. There was much gas bubbling through the water, and some petroleum floated on its surface; it was very muddy, and left a thick deposit as it flowed away. Neither flames nor noise accompanied this eruption, although indications of such were expected, which made many of us step backward.

There are also diminutive volcanoes, consisting of small hills, from which nothing seems to be emitted but various sorts of gas. These are called air volcanoes; such are those of Turbaco, in South America, discovered by Baron Humboldt. These volcanic hillocks are truncated cones, eighteen or twenty in number, composed of hardened mud, from 18 ft. to 24 ft. in height, and from about 140 ft. to 180 ft. diameter at the base. The small craters at the top are filled with liquid mud, whence bubbles of gas (chiefly nitrogen) are being constantly discharged.

There is a similar but larger group in the neighbourhood of Carthage; it consists of about 100 cones, spread over a district of nearly 400 square leagues. There is also a group of about 50 cones within a range of four or five miles in the adjacent peninsula of Galera-Zamba. A submarine volcano, whence there have been several eruptions, is supposed to be connected with these.

Java contains a remarkable mud volcano. When viewed from a distance there are seen to rise from it large volumes of vapour, like the sprays from the billows dashing against a rocky shore, and thence is heard a loud noise like distant thunder. On a near approach the source of these phenomena is seen to be a hemispherical mound of black earth mixed with water, about 16 ft. in diameter, and which, at intervals of a few seconds, is pushed upwards, by a force acting from beneath, to a height of about 20 ft. or 30 ft. It then suddenly explodes with a loud noise, scattering in every direction a quantity of black mud, which has a strong, pungent smell resembling that of coal-tar, and is considerably warmer than the air. When the mud is thus thrown out there has been formed around the mound a large, perfectly level, and nearly circular plain about half a mile in circumference. The water mixed with the mud is salt, and the salt is separated from it, by evaporation, for economical purposes. During the rainy season the action of this mud volcano becomes more violent, the explosions are louder, and the mud is thrown to a greater height. B. L.





## ADA ARGYLE.

## CHAPTER XIV.

Environed he was with many foes.

But Hercules himself must yield to odds,  
And many strokes, though with a little axe,  
Hew down and fell the hardest-timbered oak.

Shakespeare.

THE prisoner had in the meantime been brought out, and was sitting under a tree a few yards from the council ground, surrounded by a crowd of squaws and children, and guarded by two young braves who were not yet old enough to have a voice or vote in deciding his fate.

He was unbound. His friends, except Mr. Argyle, were with him, and as he knew of this last effort which was being made in his behalf of course he was "waiting for the verdict" in great excitement.

Congo was the first to speak:

"Here comes Mr. Argyle, shaking his head and looking very sober. I think it's all over with you." Yes, the decision was against mercy by a majority of five votes.

A shout from the prisoner and a beckoning of the hand towards his friends showed that he desired them to come to him, and they immediately followed the rabble of squaws and children, who were moving, with the condemned man in their midst, towards the gauntlet lines which were being formed almost in the place where the mimic race had taken place half an hour before.

Poor Hare was evidently too much frightened to stand any chance of escape in the ordeal which was now so close at hand. He had already thrown off his coat and vest, and was arrayed only in gray woollen undershirts, and muslin shirt, with boots, and a straw hat.

He was deathly pale about the forehead and temples; but there was a flush upon his cheeks which went and came, and, with his pallor, his flaring nostrils, and his glaring eyes, he proclaimed his excitement to be little less than that of a madman. Perhaps it would have been well for him if he had been mad at this moment, for insanity might have saved him from some deeds of daring which would have saved his life.

His conductors stopped for his friends to come up when they saw that was his wish, and he handed Mr. Argyle the letters which he had written to his wife and father; he had kept them by him until now for the purpose of adding some pencil postscripts to them from time to time.

He had given his watch and pocket-book to him

## [THE LAST REQUEST.]

secretly the evening before, being fearful that he might be plundered of them, though Argyle had faith enough in this singular people to believe that there was no danger of such an occurrence.

Two red balliffs caught hold of the prisoner's arm, and dragged him along, one of them saying, impatiently:

"Too much talky-talky. No good."

Hare looked back and exclaimed:

"Try—try, Argyle, for mercy's sake! Somewhere! Somehow! Don't—don't give me up yet!"

But his custodians hurried him along, and if his friend made any reply he did not hear it. The crowd which now enveloped the prisoner prevented the white men from getting near him, and, as to Kamsell, he was hurrying to and fro, like a field officer on parade (except that he was on foot), and if he came near the white men he gave them no opportunity to address him, but plainly showed by his manner towards them that he considered their presence there as an impertinence and an intrusion.

"He feels mighty big," said Congo, angrily. "I should just like to have him alone a little while out in the field there without any weapons but our fists. I'd give him such a drubbing that he'd call 'Ki-i! ki-i!' like a dog caught under a waggon wheel."

"Come, Mr. Argyle," said the captain, who saw his painfully anxious look; "it's plain that nothing more can be done. Don't let's stay and see the man butchered, or, if we wish to see the end, we can do so from our boat."

"So say I," added Hutton; "we have stayed here too long for our safety already."

The other men concurred, except Congo, who kept silent, and seemed unwilling to differ from Argyle whom he venerated so much.

"Go, gentlemen, if you consider it your duty. There is the boat; take it and go," was Argyle's reply; "I shall certainly stay. I have promised this poor fellow to stand by him to the last, and I shall do it. I do not think he has many minutes of life left."

Captain Chrome hesitated; but as it now became evident that the lists were complete, and the race about to begin, curiosity detained him, and indeed induced the whole party to press closer to the course and get a better view.

The crowd had broken away from the starting-end of the line, some of the squaws and large boys having taken their places in the ranks, club in hand, and others being scattered along the route where they could better see its whole extent.

As the white spectators were scarcely fifty yards distant from the lists they could now distinctly see

everything that took place, and Hare, catching sight of them through the opening which had been made, beckoned to them eagerly to come nearer.

Mr. Argyle alone attempted to comply, but when he had advanced about half-way he was stopped by loud cries and angry gestures from the Indians, and he got no nearer.

The prisoner was stationed with his back against a tree, and the nearest of his watchful foes were about six feet distant from him, they being two lads of sixteen or seventeen years at the head of the line, who were evidently ambitious of bringing him down at the very outset of his course.

They did not look in any way wrathful, Argyle thought—they even exchanged nods and smiles now and then while they waited for the sport to begin; but as the starting moment drew near there was an eager, intent look on their faces, like that of hunters when the deer is breaking cover.

Dertejap was seated on the ground at the lower end of the lists, where he could command a view of the race, and see that no rule of the course was violated, and by him also the signal for starting was to be given.

One who acted as a sort of marshal went along the lines, to see that every man was in his proper place.

Half a minute later the starting signal was given by the chief rising to his feet and clapping his hands, and before he had struck them twice together the prisoner sprang forward with an unexpected velocity which carried him past the first half-dozen of his enemies unharmed, while their swift blows fell upon the empty air.

Inspired by this success, the young man dashed onward, receiving some blows from the women, but dodging others, and now and then stooping low and darting beneath the extended clubs of his assailants.

Some happy instinct, or some rapid mental action, appeared to govern his movements, for he seemed to see where his most formidable foes were stationed, and to avoid them by brushing close along the opposite line—too close for club-blows, and too swift for arrest or detention by the grapple of long arms, which, dropping their weapons, strove to clutch him as he passed.

Never, perhaps, had so singular a race been run; for, although the desperate fugitive violated no rule of the lists, he made so many feints and dodges and sudden turns that he disappointed all calculations as to where he would be found at any given instant. In fact, his unexpected pluck and activity surprised both friends and foes, and Mr. Argyle could not forbear sending forth a cheer of encouragement as the fugitive sped past him.

But it was ill-timed, and evoked a defiant response from the lower half of the line, in which the best warriors were stationed; for as yet the panting man had encountered but few of the braves, though there were many sturdy young men and still active old ones among those whom he had baffled and passed by.

But even when he had entered upon the latter half of his race his good fortune seemed to attend him, and, although some sounding blows fell upon him and staggered him at times, he kept on, making swift progress, though doubling often, and standing at bay occasionally for a few seconds to get breath for renewed exertions.

And now, to the astonishment of all, he has passed two-thirds of his foes, and yet retains his feet, while a tumult of cries and shouts comes up from those he has eluded, inciting the others to more vigilant action.

That he should have gone so far unharmed seemed little less than a miracle, but Mr. Argyle was nearly certain that some of the blows seemingly aimed at him with the greatest fury were mere feints, and were made by those who had voted for his release in council, and were still willing to see him go free.

But this favoritism, alas! was not likely to save him.

Kamsell, perhaps, had anticipated it, for many of his partisans were stationed near him, and they formed a terrible phalanx which the prisoner had yet to pass before his safety could be obtained.

Jaded, breathless, bruised, and weakened—what could he do? There was no mercy in the fierce faces before him—the sacred teachings of forgiveness had not moved their stony hearts.

The despoiled and trembling prisoner had grown almost into a hero in their estimation, when it would be an honour to initiate and whose escape would be a lasting disgrace to their prowess.

The result was almost inevitable.

Poor Hare, after his really gallant defence, fell under a heavy blow, not a dozen yards from the goal of safety, and he lay stunned and motionless on the ground, and to all appearance quite dead.

His friends, indeed, hoped that such might be the case, and that his sufferings were ended, but in this they were disappointed, for when a few gouts full of water had been dashed over him by his exultant foes he revived and showed that he had yet enough of life in him to gratify their ferocity, which was only now fully awakened.

#### CHAPTER XV.

What scene of death hath Rouscious now to act?

*Shakespeare.*

WHILE some gathered around the fallen man and jeered and taunted him with his defeat others busied themselves in making preparations for their next scene in the tragic entertainment.

The pyre was soon in process of construction around the trunk of a tree, and as there were many willing hands to gather the dry faggots and green boughs of which it was composed it did not take long to complete it.

Space was left between the fuel and the tree for the prisoner to stand, and there was also an opening through the pile wide enough to admit of his passage and to allow access to him for any preliminary torment.

Still no haste was made in leading the condemned man to execution. The pleasure of anticipation was something, and perhaps it was deemed best not to have the popular show terminate too soon.

It was yet only about eight o'clock in the morning, and while some of the women and children surrounded the captive—who had again been bound—and amused themselves by inflicting small annoyances upon him the warriors gathered in squads and entered into an animated discussion of the sport in which they had just been engaged.

Some justified their blunders, some extolled their skill, which had only been defeated by the most extraordinary ill-luck; but all agreed in awarding the honours of the day to the valiant Bulboo—whatsoever that name might mean—whose club had brought the exhausted man down.

Now, as Bulboo was a half-brother to the deceased Strong Arm, this result was generally satisfactory, and was probably considered a proof of approval of the ordeal on the part of those unseen powers which guide the destinies of men.

However this may have been, the victor had certainly gained caste and influence by his success, and the thought at once occurred to the watchful Argyle that if anything more could be attempted in behalf of the prisoner in the short time which remained for action this was the most promising field for effort.

To speak more properly, it was the least forbidding, for, as to promise or hope in any quarter now, even the sanguine Argyle could scarcely be said to indulge it.

Yet here he thought was a gleam. Dertejap could do nothing, and the proud Kamsell could not even be approached directly by the white men, to whom he had evidently conceived a hatred; but Bulboo, satisfied with his exploit, might perhaps listen to the voice of mercy for a "consideration," and be made the medium of a new communication with and farther overtures to the imperious Kamsell.

Argyle in younger days had been an amateur artist, and he was still a ready if not very correct draughtsman with the pencil.

Seated under a tree, with his inverted hat for an easel, he drew on the blank leaf of a letter a picture of a prancing horse saddled and bridled, with a tolerable likeness of Bulboo at his side, holding him by the reins.

Then he sketched two other horses, similarly caparisoned, eight or ten guns, two kegs, and made a rather bungling attempt to represent a box of clay pipes and a pile of blankets.

Having completed this picture-writing, he watched his opportunity when the busy Kamsell was at a distance, then he despatched Congo to ask the chief if he would come and see his white brother once more for a few minutes, and would bring the great warrior Bulboo with him.

Dertejap was seated on the grass, smoking his red pipe, and watching the proceedings of those around him, and when he saw the man approaching he motioned to him to go back, and pointed to the place where the boats were moored, as an intimation that the strangers ought now to depart.

But these inhospitable gestures were evidently made more in anger than in anger, and as Joe insisted on coming forward, and began to speak, the chief by a quick motion of the hand signified to him to sit down on the ground, with his back to the crowd, of whom but few, if any, were near enough to hear what might be said.

Congo obeyed, and delivered his message as intelligibly as he could.

"My brother is not wine," replied Dertejap. "He is free now. By-and-bye he may be tied in a tree."

"Guess not," replied Congo. "Come, he good, Mr. Dirtychap. You're a great chief."

The Indian smiled, and replied with a brief eulogy upon his own greatness, of which Joe could understand but little except the drift, but he nodded gravely at the end of each magniloquent sentence, and repeated:

"Great chief."

But the potent ruler did not deport himself like one at liberty to do all that he pleased. He looked carefully on every side of him, and particularly in the direction in which Kamsell had vanished, then informed Congo that he would meet his brother in one of the remote wigwags, which he pointed out to him. "Him go; I come!" he said.

"And bring Captain Bully Boy?" asked the man.

"Yes, me bring um."

Joe returned with this message, being careful to keep his eye on the lodge which had been named as the rendezvous, and Mr. Argyle, with hopes slightly revived, was soon on his way thither, accompanied by Congo, and regardless of the renewed entreaties of Captain Chrome to embark and of the threats of Hutton and another that they would seize the boat and go without him.

He went unostentatiously, so as not to attract attention, and when he was sure that he was unwatched, unless by Dertejap, he entered the deserted cabin, and from its one open window looked anxiously forth for the approach of the two men to whom this, his last appeal, was to be made.

The fact that this was his last hope, and that if it failed his young friend and companion, with whose interests he had so completely identified himself, would in a few minutes be in the hands of his torturers and executioners, made him exceedingly nerveless.

At one moment he thought that he was foolishly persistent, and that so far from there being any prospect of success he was only risking his own life and that of his other comrades by his importunities. But at the next there seemed a little ground for hope, and he could not bear to abandon it.

Nor is it, perhaps, strange that in all these efforts the thought of Mr. Hare's father, whom Argyle had never seen, was perpetually in his mind. He had not proved over affectionate as a parent himself, yet his sympathies for this old man, so soon to be made wretched by the tidings of his son's fate—if it could not be averted—did more to impel him onward in his humane course than even his pity for the prisoner himself.

Dertejap and Bulboo soon came, the latter evidently wondering, and looking by no means mild or benignant; yet if his war-paint had been washed off perhaps all his fierceness of expression would have gone with it.

He was a young man, scarcely past thirty years, tall and slim, and clad in a kirtle of deer-skin, which extended to his knees, and, with his leggings and moccasins, constituted his only apparel.

Two dried claws of the grizzly bear, fastened by a leathern string around his neck, rested like epaulettes upon his shoulders, and were the badge of his rank as a brave, he having killed the monster whose trophies he thus wore.

Mr. Argyle opened the conference by frankly informing Dertejap of his designs, and, by way of elucidating his meaning, he exhibited the pictures he had drawn, which at once enlisted the curiosity and excited the admiration of the Indians.

Bulboo at once recognized the portrait of himself, for the figure and dress were sufficient to individualize it, and he seemed much pleased with it as a work of art before he comprehended the object for which it had been drawn.

Argyle, before making any offer of presents, which were so likely to delight a red-skin, reminded the chief that he did not propose to pay for the blood of Strong Arm; but if his people were inclined to be just and merciful he wished to show them what they would gain by it.

The prisoner, he said, was rich. He would give three horses, like those in the sketch, all saddled and bridled to Dertejap, Kamsell, and Bulboo, so that they might each ride to the chase or the battle-field as became their rank. He would also give a dozen good rifles, a dozen broad-cloth blankets, with the yellow serge on, five kegs of fire-water, five of powder, two hundred pipes, a barrel of tobacco, a big box full of coloured glass beads, and enough earrings and finger rings of the best brass to supply the whole tribe.

"And the regimentals, Mr. Argyle," said the watchful Congo, when the other had ended this enumeration of tempting gifts; "put in the regimentals, for the Indians think an awful sight of them."

Yes, it was well thought of. Two military suits, with epaulettes, were added to the list—these also being sketched by Argyle's facile pencil—one of them being for the great chief, Dertejap, and the other for the great brave, Kamsell.

"And one for Bully Boy," whispered Congo.

No; Argyle did not wish to make these coveted articles too common, and, but for the fear of offending the chief, he would have offered only one, making it a special prize for Kamsell, whose large influence he was especially anxious to secure.

The Indians listened with an amazed and puzzled look to the enumeration of this catalogue of treasures, but, much to the disappointment of Argyle, who watched their countenances closely, they showed no sign of being particularly pleased.

After conversing gruffly, and with seeming anger, in their own language, the chief took up the pictured paper and said:

"My brother is not wise. These things are not for men—they are for children."

"No go! no shoot! No good!" added Bulboo.

"Why, Mr. Argyle," added Joe, "I'm 'shot if they don't think it's the paper horses and guns that you are offering them. He! he! He! he! What a pair of sillyhammers!"

"Keep still, Joe!" replied the other, smiling, and proceeding to correct the mistake by assuring the red-men, in the best mixed English and Indian that he could command, that he offered them real living horses, of any colour that they chose, and real rifles and blankets, and everything else which he had enumerated, real and substantial and of the best kind.

"Me no see 'um," replied the chief, affecting to look round through the door and window. "Does my brother keep his horses in the clouds or under the great lake?"

That both the Indians were altogether incredulous, and were now inclined to depart in disgust, was quite apparent, and it was with no little difficulty that Argyle succeeded in making them understand the remaining part of his proposition.

They should retain their prisoner, he said, until the presents came, which should be at the farthest by the next new moon—about twenty days ahead—and if they failed to receive all that had been promised they might then carry out their sentence against him.

As a pledge of his sincerity, and of his expectation to redeem his promises, he offered the chief his watch to keep until he came back bringing all the gifts; and Joe added to this offer that of his magic cork-screw, on the special condition that it should be kept safe, and should be returned to him "when the horses and guns came."

The Indians, though still looking amazed, now seemed much pleased, and said they would both talk to Kamsell and to their people and try to turn their hearts, if it was not too late, but that the prisoner was already being led to the tree, as his friends could see, and that his tortures had probably begun. "Then, for Heaven's sake, make haste," exclaimed



Argyle, who remembered the pistol in Hare's hand; "and you, Congo—run! run! Get as near to him as you can, and tell him what we are doing."

"Yes, I know sir, I'll try," said Joe, "but Captain Kamsell—he'll drive me off, I know, and I'm afraid he will tomahawk me."

"Run!—run! I'll follow as fast as I can. If you can't get near enough to speak to him make signs that we are coming."

The four men all started to the scene of torture, but at very different rates of speed, for the two Indians walked with stately gravity, conversing as they went. Argyle ran a little, but was obliged to stop frequently to take breath; but Congo far outstripped them all, and was soon hovering on the outskirts of the crowd of men, women, and children, who were gathered around the execution-tree.

Finding it impossible to get through this throng, he imitated the example of many of the Indian boys and girls, and climbed a tree, from the lowest branches of which he could overlook the crowd, and get a view of all that was going on.

The condemned man was bound to a small maple by a rope of bark, which had been passed several times around his waist, but his limbs and head were left free, probably for the additional amusement to be derived from seeing him attempt to dodge or ward off the various missiles aimed at him by his persecutors.

This sport had already begun, as was apparent from some arrows and knives striking in the tree near his head, and a shout of laughter which rang through the crowd just as Congo attained his elevated seat applauded the successful feat of pinning one ear of the captive to the tree by a shaft from a bow.

Pale as a ghost, and frantic with terror, poor Hare now put up his hands to ward off the flying weapons, and now tried to extricate the arrow from his ear, growling meanwhile and begging for mercy in language, of course, which would have been unintelligible to most of his tormentors if heard, but that it was outwaded by their own shouts and cries.

He had been left clad in the garments in which he had run his race, with the exception of his hat, which was off, and Congo could plainly see the stock of his pistol slightly protruding from the pocket of his pantaloons, as if he had partly drawn it out and yet feared to use it.

His hand wandered irresolutely towards it now and then, and as it seemed that his sufferings and dread must nerve him to a speedy use of this effectual means of escaping the malice of his enemies Joe hastily tried to attract his attention without drawing upon himself the observation of the savage crowd.

He drew from his pocket a yellow cotton kerchief and waved it towards him, but, failing to accomplish his object in this way, and seeing that his hand again sought his pistol and rested with firm grasp upon the protruding stock, he shouted desperately to him, heedless of the danger which he was drawing upon himself:

"Mr. Hare! Mr. Hare!" he cried, "hold on there! Don't shoot yourself! They're coming to save you yet!"

Probably little or nothing of this was understood by the prisoner, but he heard Joe Congo's voice, and, following the eyes of the crowd, who turned like one man to look at the intruder, saw him still waving his yellow flag.

Great confusion ensued, many of the savages believing that the black "medicine-man" was performing some incantation to save the life of his friend, and others, less superstitious, aiming guns and arrows at him, seemingly by direction of the irate Kamsell, whose shouted orders sounded over the field.

The vigilant Joe, seeing this danger, leaped to the ground and ran to meet Mr. Argyle, who was now close at hand, followed at a little distance by the chief and Bulboo, who had also quickened their speed, and were fast coming up.

"Stop, Mr. Argyle—stop! Let's get behind the chief and Captain Bully Boy!" exclaimed the frightened Joe, "or they'll shoot us both just as sure as a gun."

Argyle complied with this prudent request, for many of the Indians were rushing towards them, but Dertejap waved them back with an authoritative gesture of his hand, and, placing himself in front of the imperilled men, bade them sit down on the grass and keep quite still.

"Is he alive?" asked Argyle, in a whisper, as he complied with this order, for his solicitude for Hare still outweighed his sense of personal danger.

"Yes, sir; but he's got the pistol in his hand, and I expect to hear it go off every minute."

"No, you have effected a diversion for the present, I think. We'll see."

"I don't think it's very diverting, sir," replied the trembling Congo. "I find we've both got our feet in. Only see how mad they are."

"They won't come any nearer. See, the chief is speaking to them, and Bulboo stands close at his side to show that he agrees with him."

"Wh-what does he say?"

"He is only telling them to be quiet, I believe, and to send Kamsell to him. At least I judge so by his gestures and his frequent mention of the orator's name."

"Yes—yes—there comes Captain Kamsell, looking as fierce as a turkey gobbler; and a lot of others just like him. It's all up with us now, Mr. Argyle. I never was so scared before. I tell you they'll burn us all."

"Well, well, keep still. There's nothing else that we can do now; for to speak would incense them still more, and to run would probably be fatal."

But little of the dialogue which now ensued between the chief and his warriors was understood by Mr. Argyle, but, judging from its tones, it was not over courteous on either side. If it was not an angry altercation it was something very near it, and if Dertejap had not been supported by Bulboo (the victor in the lists, and a near relative to Strong Arm) he would scarcely have gained a hearing in asking, as he now did, for an hour's suspension of the proceedings against the prisoner until a new "talk" could be had, and a new proposition considered.

Shouts of indignant refusal met this request at first; but when Bulboo had gone over to Kamsell and whispered a few words to him—(possibly about the presents)—that dignitary consented to a respite and a new council, but scouted the idea of its terminating differently from the preceding ones.

That no time might be lost, the braves were at once segregated from the crowd, and were seated on the ground under the shade of a large tree, while the prisoner, still bound, was left exposed to such annoyances as the squaws and small children saw fit to inflict, without however using any weapons upon him.

They pulled his hair; they pinched his flesh; they made mocking faces at him; they pelted him with tufts of sod and dirt, and loaded him with opprobrious epithets, which however were lost upon him as he did not understand them.

But his friends, Argyle and Congo, though not allowed to approach him, were now within his view, and as long as he was not abandoned he would not quite despair, nor resort to suicide, as he was momentarily tempted to do, to escape the indignities which were being heaped upon him.

As to hope of escape or relief, he could scarcely be said to indulge it, for he knew nothing of the reason why his more severe tortures were suspended, and he supposed it was only for the purpose of giving the women and children their share in the tragical sport.

Argyle and his sable friend did not know whether they were in custody or not. Several armed red-skins remained near them, and Joe, who had evidently given serious offence, was disposed to take a sombre view of affairs.

"If Captain Kamsell has his way it's all up with us, sir," he said. "He won't believe in all these promises. 'Cause why? You've offered them too much, sir. He'll say you've only gone home after soldiers to rescue Hare. You'll see. Why do they not send for you to the council if they are friendly?"

Sure enough, Mr. Argyle was far from easy, and almost at this moment a new cause for alarm was discovered, and was announced to them by one of the red-men standing near, who, with some unintelligible ejaculation, pointed to the lake where Captain Chrome's boat was seen rapidly departing, and already many rods from shore.

The chase after Congo had added the climax to the fears of Hutton, who, with the other two men, had forcibly seized the boat; and the captain, not daring to remain, had gone with them.

(To be continued.)

**DESTRUCTION OF ANTIQUITIES BY FIRE.**—An interesting historical relic, or rather a whole collection of relics, which it is impossible to replace, a short time since became a prey to the flames in the ancient city of Erfurt. There stands the Augustine monastery in which Martin Luther lived and conceived his first idea of a Reformation, converted at present into an orphan asylum. A fire suddenly broke out a few weeks ago, and totally destroyed the most interesting part of the building in which was Luther's cell, and also the room where he first gave shape to his great scheme. In these rooms, which have been up to the latest time shown to strangers as curiosities, Luther's Bible was kept with marginal notes in the reformer's own handwriting, together with the painting "Death's Dance," by Beck, and other valuable relics. All of these have been burnt. The pecuniary damage is

estimated at about 60,000 thalers; the historical loss is incalculable.

## MYSTERY OF THE HAUNTED GRANGE.

### CHAPTER XXXVIII.

SIR VANE CHARTERIS and his family had been back two days in the house in Berkeley Square.

"I will never go to Montalien Priory of my own will," said Paulina Lisle; "and if you take me by force I will run away and seek refuge with Duke Mason an hour after we get there."

"Such invincible determination I never saw equalled in old or young!" Sir Vane said, to the last day of his life.

And indeed there was truth in the forcible remark. Paulina had kept her rooms, to the surprise of everybody, for a fortnight at Brighton. Sir Vane sent up his own man with a polite request that Miss Lisle would join them that day at dinner. Miss Lisle's prompt answer was characteristic:

"Tell Sir Vane Charteris, Brownson, with my compliments, that I have stayed a prisoner here for two weeks to please him—I shall now stay two more to please myself!" And Miss Lisle would have been as good as her word had not the baronet whisked his whole family back to town.

London was deserted now by their world, but Mrs. Atcherly, Paulina's friend, had a seat at Twickenham; and on the 22nd of December was to give a grand ball, to be preceded by private theatricals; and to these theatricals and to this ball Paulina had promised faithfully to go.

But Sir Vane ruled it otherwise.

"If Mrs. Atcherly should happen to call," he said to his sister, "tell her Paulina is indisposed, and unable to attend. If she thought she was to be taken to 'The Firs' she would throw herself upon the Atcherlys' protection, as soon as not, and the old colonel is a very Don Quixote about women."

Mrs. Atcherly did call on the twenty-first, and was told, in Mrs. Galbraith's smoothest way, that poor Paulina would not be able to attend—the child had been indisposed since a fortnight before they left Brighton.

Was the list of Miss Lisle's enormities never to be filled? The drawing-room door opened as Mrs. Galbraith spoke, and the young lady herself walked in, her cheeks glowing, her eyes sparkling, the very impersonation of excellent health and spirits.

"Not so indisposed, Mrs. Galbraith, that she cannot greet an old friend. And, dear Mrs. Atcherly, I will go to Twickenham to-morrow night if I have to walk there."

Mrs. Galbraith turned passionately to Miss Lisle the instant her visitor had quitted the house.

Miss Lisle lifted one hand with a haughty gesture that stilled the rising tempest.

"Mrs. Galbraith," she said, in a voice that rang, "enough of this. I am no child to be whipped and put to bed as you see fit—no poor, timid, spiritless creature to be tyrannized over by your brother. I shall go to Twickenham to-morrow night as surely as to-morrow night comes."

She swept out of the room superbly. As she passed the library—the door ajar—she was suddenly checked by hearing her own name from the hated lips of Lord Montalien.

"Does Paulina know that yet you are going to take her to 'The Firs' for the winter?" he asked.

"Not yet. I tell you, Montalien, the determined will of that girl is past belief! She is capable of anything. She shall not know her destination until we have fairly started. Eleanor will fabricate some story to satisfy her. Once at 'The Firs' I have no fear. It will be all our own way then—the house is as lonely and desolate as a tomb; and I will take care she does not pass the gates. You will be with her day and night—if you cannot make her consent to marry you before spring, why then—"

"She shall consent, by fair means or foul. She shall only leave 'The Firs' as my wife."

He rose as he spoke, and Paulina flitted away.

In her own rooms she sank down white and cold. What horrible plot was this they were concocting against her? They were going to imprison her for months and months at "The Firs," that dreary house Mrs. Galbraith ever spoke of with a shudder. And Lord Montalien was to be her constant companion, and by fair means or foul she was only to leave it his wife. Her heart grew faint within her. Her own will might be strong, but that of those two men was stronger. Imprisoned there—friendless—how could she hope to outwit them?

"I will never go to 'The Firs,'" she cried, clenching her little hands frantically; "I will die first!"

What should she do? She was—for the first time in her brave life—horribly afraid. What should she do? Tell Mrs. Atcherly, and ask her to help protect her? Sir Vane was her guardian, and what more

natural than that he should choose to spend the winter with his family down at his place in Essex?

Her friends could not, dare not, help her. Should she run away and earn her own living? Alas! she had only two or three shillings in the wide world, and a London detective would find and bring her back in two days. And Sir Vane was capable of anything—he might take out a writ of lunacy against her, and shut her up in a madhouse, as he had done his wife.

Oh, what—what should she do? She spent a day and a night, and another day, almost maddened by doubt and fear. How she hated and abhorred these two men.

By the time the evening of the twenty-second came she had wrought herself up to a pitch of excitement that made her ready for anything. Yes, anything under the canopy of Heaven to escape the fate that threatened her.

"Something must be done to-night," she thought as she dressed herself for Mrs. Atcherly's ball.

She had not the least idea what, but something must be done to avert her fate. Never, never, never! would she go down to "The Firs."

She was thinking this as her maid dressed her—thinking it as they drove rapidly through the cold, moonlit night—thinking it as she entered Mrs. Atcherly's brilliant rooms, filled with pleasant people. She was looking beautiful, in a dress of silver-blue moiré, with diamonds sparkling in her golden hair, on her marble throat and arms. She was pale as marble herself, but there was a feverish fire in her eyes that told of the unrest within.

Sir Vane, Lord Montalien, even Maud, attended this party to witness the theatricals. Bills printed on white satin were passed around. The play was "Camilla's Husband." "Camilla by Miss Atcherly, and the young artist, who is the hero of the piece, by Guy Earlscoort."

"His last appearance on any stage," laughed his brother to Sir Vane, "before he goes forth into the outer darkness, to be seen and heard of no more. He was always a sort of pet with those people. He has sold out, you know, and must leave England within the week, or the Jews will be down upon him, and all his brilliancy, and all his beauty, will be wasted sweetness on the desert air of a debtor's prison."

"How you do hate your brother," Sir Vane thought; "and you do not possess even the common decency to conceal it."

Perhaps many of those who read this have seen the play called "Camilla's Husband." A young lady, persecuted by a tyrannical guardian, makes her escape, and asks the first man she meets to marry her.

The first man is a strolling artist, who consents, marries her, receives a purse of gold, is told he is never to see or seek her again, and she disappears. Of course it ends, as it ought to end, in the artist saving her life, and eventually winning her love and herself.

The curtain arose and the play began.

Miss Atcherly, beautifully dressed, and for an amateur young actress speaking loud enough to be heard by the first three rows of auditors, at least, is received with applause.

Mr. Earlscoort, as the lucky artist, looking wonderfully handsome, in a suit of black velvet and gold—appropriate costume for a penniless painter—speaks so that everybody can hear his deep tenor tones, and comes forward to the footlights, trilling a song. Nature had given him every requisite for a first-rate actor—a darkly splendid face, a tall, commanding form, a deep, rich voice, and perfectly natural action. No professional actor could have played better than he—his genius even warmed up the others in their parts, and gave Miss Atcherly courage to find her voice. Scores there remembered, for years after, how he looked that night—the last night, as they thought, for ever of his old life. It was all over—the crash had come—his brilliant Bohemian existence was at an end for ever. Outlawry—exile—disgrace was his portion, and he stood before them, looking handsomer than ever, and acting as though he had not a care in the world.

Paulina Lisle sat watching the progress of the play, led away from the great trouble of her life in its interest. How well he played, she thought, how magnificent he looked! How like "Camilla's" fate was to her own! Oh! if she could but cut the gordian knot of her difficulties by asking somebody to marry her too! The hour that saw her a wife made her a free woman—out of the power of Sir Vane and Lord Montalien, and her fortune her own! She did not want to be married—she was not a whit in love with any man alive, but if she could find a man who would consent to leave her, in her wedding hour, as this artist left Camilla—why then—But where was she to find such a man? There were half a dozen men in that very room who would be only too glad to end her difficulties for her by marrying

her, but not one of those selfish creatures, she knew, would resign her for ever in the hour that made her his wife. It was only on the stage that such nobel-minded bridegrooms were to be found. No, that way there was no hope. Yet, if it had been possible, what a triumph it would be over the men she hated!

It was the last scene of the last act. "Camilla" is hopelessly in love with her artist, and that moment is drawing near when she shall fling herself into his arms and declare that "Happy am I since you are Camilla's husband."

Guy was playing superbly; and when, in the last moment, he opens his arms, and his wife falls into them, the whole house burst forth into a tumult of applause, in the midst of which the curtain fell, and the play was over.

"How well he acted," a voice near Paulina said, as a young officer of the Guards arose with a military friend, "for a man irretrievably ruined. His debts are enormous; and his old aunt has died, and left all to that cad of an elder brother. What a pity the days of Faust and Mephistophiles are over! Guy Earlscoort would sell his soul to the Evil One, I verily believe, without a moment's hesitation, for twenty thousand pounds! He must leave England in a day or two and for ever."

The speaker passed on; but his lightly spoken words had been heard and heeded. In that instant, as she listened, it all flashed upon Paulina like a lightning gleam. Guy Earlscoort was the man—the man to marry and save her—the man to take half her fortune and leave her for ever.

Are there not moments in our lives when the sanest of us are mad for the time? It was one of those moments with Paulina. She must have been mad, her brain was half-dazed with thinking, her danger was so great and so imminent, and witnessing this play had wrought her up to the last pitch of excitement.

Think of this when you condemn her—are horrified at her!

She never excused herself, in after days, when the frenzy of this time had passed—she never looked back to this night without turning cold at heart with shame and horror of herself.

She leaned against a slender pilaster—the room, the lights, the faces swimming before her. Her eyes were fixed with the intensity of insanity upon the face of Guy Earlscoort, surrounded by all the ladies in the rooms, receiving their compliments and congratulations, with his usual negligent, courtly grace. All her liking, all her friendship for him, all her pity vanished.

He was hardly a man, only the instrument, the automaton, who was to save her for a certain stipulated price.

He turned laughingly at last from his admirers and saw her.

How strange, how wild she looked! The deadly pallor of her face, the burning brightness of her eyes, what did they mean—was she ill? He approached—the spell of those fevered eyes drawing him to her.

"What is it?" he asked.

She caught his arm.

"I want you," she said, in a breathless sort of way.

"Take me out of this room."

Wondering—amazed—curious, he drew her hand within his arm, and led her through several rooms to a sort of small, half-lit boudoir. He had frequently been to the house, and he knew it well.

A clouded light, like moonlight, filled this small room, and flowers made the air heavy with perfume. He dropped a velvet curtain over the door-way, and turned to her.

"Now?" he said.

Something uncommon was coming—he knew not what.

She looked at him; the burning light in her eyes almost frightened him. Was she in the first stage of a brain fever?

"You are going to leave England?" she asked, abruptly.

"I am."

"When?"

"In three days."

"For where?"

"The new world. I am going to seek my fortune abroad."

"You will never return to England? Never? Never?"

"Never, in all probability."

"Then what can it matter to you? It will make your fate no worse, and it will save me. You shall have half my fortune—do you hear?—forty thousand pounds, if you will swear to keep the secret, and never to come back—never come near me—never let the world know I married you."

The words burst from her wildly—incoherently.

He looked at her in blank amazement. Was Miss Lisle going mad?

"Oh, you don't understand," she cried. "I am like

the woman in that play—I am not mad, though they will drive me so in the end. I tell you they are going to make me marry Lord Montalien, and I hate him! I hate him! I will kill myself first!"

A light began to dawn upon Guy. By some subtle instinct he understood her at once.

"They—meaning Sir Vane Charteris and Mrs. Galbraith I suppose—are going to make you marry Lord Montalien?"

"Yes. You know 'The Firs'—that desolate, abandoned old manor-house on the Essex coast? They are going to imprison me there until I consent. They will do with me as was done with my mother—compel me to marry a man I abhor. There is only one way of escape."

"That is to marry some one else."

He was entering into the spirit of the thing now. Mad escapades of all sorts had been the delight of his life.

What could be better than to finish his career in England by the maddest escapade of all? He understood her as few men would have done, and pitied her intensely in this hour of her desperation.

"Miss Lisle," he said, "will you marry me?"

He had spoken the words for her. She gave a sort of gasp of intense relief.

"I will—if you consent to my conditions."

"What are they?"

"That you accept half my fortune, and in the moment of our marriage leave me for ever."

"The first is easy enough—the second—well, not so pleasant. Still, to oblige a lady in distress—"

There was a small Bible, bound in gold and pearl, on the table. She snatched it up and held it open to him.

"Swear," she cried; "swear by all you hold sacred, never to molest me, never to claim any right as my husband, never, come what may, to betray my secret, to leave me at the church door—swear!"

He took the book without a second's hesitation, and touched it with his lips.

"I swear!" he said.

She drew a long breath of relief. The cold dew was standing in great drops on her white face. She sank down in a chair and hid her face in her hands with a dry, choking sob. The young man stood and looked at her with a feeling of intense pity.

"Poor child!" he said, very softly; "it is hard on you. And now when is it to be?"

"They mean to start for 'The Firs' by the earliest train. Once there all is lost."

"Then we must be beforehand with them. Gad! what a triumph it will be over Frank!" He laughed as he spoke—ruined and exiled, Guy Earlscoort could still laugh. "Let us see. Will you be married in a church in this city, Miss Lisle, at day-dawn?"

"Not in a church! Such a marriage in a church would seem a mockery—a sacrilege—anywhere else."

"Then, by Jove! I have it! What do you say to a marriage before a registrar? You walk into an office, very much like any other office, and you see an official, very much like any other official, and a few words are said, a little signing, and countersigning, and the thing is over. A marriage before a registrar, between the hours of eight and twelve in the forenoon, with open doors, in the presence of two witnesses, etc., etc. Nothing can be more simple, and you will leave the office as legally married in the eye of the law—what you want, I take it—as though a dean and chapter had done the business. I will arrange that. Will that suit you?"

"Perfectly. My maid will accompany me, and I will go directly home when the ceremony is over, and tell them there that I am out of their power at last. If you will call at the house a couple of hours later Sir Vane shall pay over to you the sum I have promised."

He smiled slightly.

"I shall call, Miss Lisle. Now as to the hour. We must be very early, in order to be beforehand with them. Say between eight and nine? Can you be ready so early?"

"I could be ready at midnight to save myself from your brother! At eight o'clock I and my maid will steal from the house, and meet you wherever you say."

"My cab shall be in waiting at the corner. The coachman will do for the other witness. Is your maid to be trusted?"

"I think so when—well paid."

"And you will not change your mind—you will not fail?"

He would not have her fail for worlds now. The romance, the piquancy of the adventure, fired his imagination. Of the future, in that hour, he never thought; just at present it looked a capital practical joke.

"Am I likely to fail?" she cried, bitterly, then, turning to him with sudden passion, she exclaimed—"Mr. Earlscoort, I wonder what you think of me."

"I understand you," he answered, respectfully.



"Desperate cases require desperate remedies. Against two such men as Lord Montalien and Sir Vane Charteris you stand no chance. Your marriage with me will save you at least from a marriage with him, and you may trust me to keep my oath!"

She turned from him in a tumult of contending emotions, among which drawing back had no part, and almost ran against Mrs. Galbraith entering the room in search of her.

That lady's angry eyes looked from one to the other. Was this a love scene she had disturbed?

"Have you no regard for your good name, Paulina," she demanded, drawing her away, "that you hold private interviews with that most disreputable young man? I think it is time we were going home."

Paulina laughed—a wild, reckless laugh. "I think so too, Mrs. Galbraith! I want to go home!"

Mrs. Galbraith gazed at her in real alarm. She looked anything but sane or safe at that moment.

"You shall go home, Paulina," she answered, soothingly. "Sit here while I go in search of my brother."

Two hours later Paulina Lisle was safely back in the quiet of her own room, pledged to become the wife of Guy Earlscurt by the maddest marriage ever woman contracted.

#### CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE threat came hissing through Lord Montalien's set teeth.

"Not his wife," Alice repeated, once more, in a sort of whisper; "not his wife!"

She turned blindly towards the door, groping like one in the dark. He lifted the curtain, and opened it for her.

"Get a cab, and go home," he said. "I will call upon you in a day or two, and see what can be done. I will provide for you, have no fear of that. Here is the money—go back quietly and wait until I come."

She did not seem to hear or heed him. She never noticed the money he offered. She went forward in the same blind way, the servant looking at her curiously, and passed from the luxurious wealth and light of those costly rooms to the bitter, drifting snow storm without.

"So much the better," muttered his lordship; "if she perish in the storm it will save me a world of trouble. Half-past nine! The fiend's in it if I cannot go to Paulina now!"

The fiend was in it—he was apt to be, horns and hoofs and all, in the same room as Francis, Lord Montalien. Before his wraps were on the door was flung open for the third time, and Mr. Stedman announced.

"Didn't expect to see me, old boy!" his visitor said, swaggering in with easy familiarity. "Going out, too—to call upon the lovely Paulina, no doubt. Well, I won't detain you many minutes. So let us sit down and be comfortable. What a cosy crib you have here, Frank, and what a lucky fellow you are! All Miss Earlscurt's money left to you instead of that unfortunate Guy. And now the rich Miss Lisle is going to marry you, they say. It's better to be born lucky than rich, but when a man's both lucky and rich what an enviable mortal he is! Ah! the world's a see-saw, and some of us go up and some go down! How comfortable this coal fire is such a night—the very dickens of a night, I can tell you. By-the-by, whom do you think I met out there just now in the storm?"

He looked cunningly at Lord Montalien, but Lord Montalien did not speak. His face was set in an angry frown.

"That poor little unfortunate Alice of yours, I put her in a cab—she didn't seem to know where she was going—and paid the driver to take her home. I believe, in my soul, she would have perished before morning."

"I wish to Heaven she had, and you with her," burst out the badgered peer. "What the deuce brings you here, Stedman? Don't you see I'm going out?"

"Now, that is inhospitable," murmured Mr. Stedman, reproachfully; "and to such a friend as I have been to you, too. Didn't you tell me I had a claim upon your gratitude you would never forget when I chose to call upon you? The time has come. I leave England in three days to seek my fortune in Australia; and I have called upon you to-night, Lord Montalien, for a cheque for three thousand pounds."

Lord Montalien laughed scornfully.

"Three thousand pounds, perhaps!" he said. "No, my lord, one of them I find quite enough to deal with at once. I want three thousand pounds, and I mean to have it before I leave this room!"

"You are mad or drunk—which?"

"Neither, most noble lord. Your secret is worth the money."

"What secret?" he asked, with a scornful stare.

"That Alice Warren, the bailiff's daughter, is your lawful wedded wife!"

"What?"

Mr. Stedman looked up at him with an exultant smile of power.

"That Alice Warren, whom ten minutes ago you turned from your doors to perish in the snow, is your lawful wedded wife, as fast as the Archbishop of Canterbury's licence and a clergyman of the Church of England can make her! That is your secret, my lord! You thought I would be your cat's paw, run my head in a noose to oblige you—do your dirty work, and take a 'Thank you' for my pains. That was your mistake. You are as tightly married to Alice Warren as though the ceremony had been performed under the roof of St. George's, Hanover Square. You can prove my words if you like easily enough—Alice Warren is Lady Montalien."

The two men looked at each other, and Lord Montalien knew he spoke the truth. In the waxlight his face was deadly pale.

"Stedman," he said, "why have you done this?"

"To wipe out an old debt of six years' standing, my lord. You know to what I refer—to Fanny Dashon. You thought I had forgotten, didn't you?—that was your little mistake. The debt was cleanly wiped out on the night you married the bailiff's daughter. Now will you give me your cheque for three thousand pounds or not?"

"And if I do not?"

"If not I will go straight from this room to Paulina Lisle, and tell her the whole story. To obtain information of her friend she will give me at least one thousand, and my revenge will be worth the other two. I think of the two courses I really should prefer it."

Lord Montalien, without a word, opened his cheque-book and wrote an order for three thousand pounds.

"What surety have I," he said, "that you will not still go to Miss Lisle when I have given you this?"

"My promise, my lord, which I will keep. Give me the cheque, and I swear to leave England, and keep your secret inviolate to the end of my life."

Without a word his lordship passed him the slip of paper.

Mr. Stedman folded it up with a satisfied smile. "Thanks, my lord; and farewell. I will detain you no longer."

He took his hat and approached the door. Then he turned round for a second, and looked at Lord Montalien, who was standing like a statue.

"My lord," he said, "it wasn't her fault. Don't be too hard on her when I am gone."

"Good-night, Mr. Stedman," his lordship answered, idly; "I know what I owe her, and how to deal with her."

Then he was alone. Alone? No! Unseen tempters, dark spirits filled the room. He threw off his overcoat, and walked up and down. Hour after hour struck—it was long past midnight, and still he never paused in that ceaseless walk.

Hour after hour wore by—morning dawned, white and cold, over London—firelight and waxlight had flickered and died away.

And with the morning Lord Montalien knew how he meant to deal with Alice.

Over the fire, in her dingy lodgings, a bloodless, attenuated shadow of a miserable woman crouched. It was Alice, but Alice so changed that her own mother, had she by any chance entered the room, would have failed to recognize her. Alice, with every vestige of beauty, of youth, of health gone—as utterly miserable a woman as the dull London light fell on.

It was snowing without, and was very cold. She had drawn a little shawl around her, and crouched with her hands outstretched to the blaze.

The few articles of summer clothing she had brought from home, in September last, were all she had.

September last! only four short months! Heaven! what a lifetime, what an eternity of misery it looked to her.

How she had reached home that night, after she left St. James's Street, she never knew. Some one put her into a cab; and when, after a day and a night of stupid, painless torpor, she awoke to consciousness, she found herself again in her own poor room, and the landlady's face looking half compassionately, half impatiently at her.

"It was always my luck to have my lodgers a falling ill on my hands, and a dying with their bills unpaid, like that Porter upstairs; and it does make a person hard, I confess," Mrs. Young afterwards owned, with remorse.

Then memory and consciousness slowly came back, and Alice recollected all. She was not Frank's wife—she was the lost creature they thought her at

home, and Frank was going to marry Paulina. No; he should never do that. She scarcely felt anger, or sorrow, or even pain now; beyond a certain point suffering ceases to be suffering, and becomes its own anesthetic. She had reached that point—she was past hope, past care, past help. She would find out Paulina, tell her her story, save her from a like fate, and—die.

Some such thoughts were in her mind as she crouched shivering over the fire. The wintry twilight was fast filling the room with its creeping darkness, when the door suddenly opened, and without a word of warning Lord Montalien stood before her.

She had never thought to see him again in this world. She looked up with a low, strange cry.

"Frank!"

"Yes, Alice, Frank! Frank come to beg your pardon for the cruel, thoughtless words he spoke the other night. Frank come back to tell you he loves you, and to ask you to forgive him for what he said."

"There is no need. I am not your wife," she answered, in a slow, dull way. "I had rather you had not come. I only want to see Paulina, and die in peace."

"You want to see Paulina! And why?"

"To tell her all—to save her from you, Frank! Poor Polly! She used to be so bright, so happy, you know, always laughing and singing; it would be a pity to break her heart. Mine is broken; but, then, it doesn't so much matter about me."

Still the same slow, dull voice—the same mournful apathy, her eyes fixed on the fire, her hands outstretched.

"I shan't live long, Frank, to trouble anybody; but I shall live long enough to tell Paulina. She will be sorry for me, I think; she used to be fond of Alice. They used to call us the two prettiest girls in Speckhaven—only think of that, Frank! Only think if they could see me now!"

She laughed—a low, faint laugh, that might have curdled her listener's blood. He bent down and looked at her closely—his face set and stern, though his voice, when he spoke, was forced into gentleness. Had her trouble turned her brain?

"I will tell her I am not your wife, and she will go down home, and let father and mother know when I am dead, and perhaps then they will try and forgive me. I've not been a very bad girl; I'm not afraid to die. It will be such rest—such rest!"

She drew a long, tired sigh, and leaned her head on her hands. Then suddenly she looked up in his face.

"Frank," she said, in a voice of indescribable pathos, "why did you treat me so? I loved you, and I trusted you, and I thought I was your wife!"

It might have moved a heart of stone; he had no heart—even of stone—to be moved.

"You foolish child," he said, with a slight laugh, "you are my wife—my only wife, as truly as ever you thought it. Do you really believe the angry words I said to you the other night? Silly Alice, I was angry, I own; I did not want you to come to my lodgings, and I spoke to you in my anger as I had no right to speak. You are my wife, and I myself will take you to Miss Lisle if you wish it."

She rose up, her breath coming in quick, short gasps.

"Frank, you will! Oh, for Heaven's sake, don't deceive me now! I couldn't bear it!"

"I am not deceiving you; I am telling you the truth. You are my wife, and you shall leave this miserable hovel, and at once. Early to-morrow morning I will come for you, and I will take you first to Paulina, and from her straight down to Montalien. You shall be happy yet, Alice."

She took a step forward, staggered into his arms, and lay there, so still, so cold that he thought her fainting. He shrunk too from her clasp with a shudder, and placed her hurriedly back in her chair.

"Compose yourself, Alice," he said, looking away from her. "Can you be ready as early as eight o'clock, or even before it, to-morrow morning?"

"Whenever you come for me, Frank, I can be ready. Oh, bless Heaven! Bless Heaven! I never thought to see you again, my darling."

She believed him implicitly. Weakly credulous, you say. Ah, well, wiser and stronger-minded women than this poor country girl are apt to be that where they love. She was neither wise nor strong in body or mind—he was her one earthly hope of salvation. When the dark, bitter waters are closing fast over our heads are we greatly to be blamed if we do grasp at straws?

"And now, Alice, as I am pressed for time," he said, drawing out his watch, "I will leave you. Here is some money to pay your bill—tell the landlady you are going home to the country with your husband, and be quite ready before eight to-morrow morning, when I shall call for you."

He left her hurriedly with the words. And Alice,

alone, knelt down and bowed her face upon her hands, and thanked Heaven—who may know how fervently, how fully for her great deliverance! She prayed for him, too—that Heaven might bless and make him happy, and render her as good a wife as he deserved. Innocent prayers, that might well sear and blight his guilty soul.

And morning dawned.

She paid the landlady, repeated her ready-made story, dressed herself in the sickly dawn, and stood by the window, watching. It was snowing fast—the wind was cold and shrill, and her garments were miserably thin. The landlady pityingly made some such remark to her. But Alice only laughed.

"I shall feel no cold, Mrs. Young; and I shall soon be beyond feeling cold, or ill, or lonely, any more."

She had uttered a prophecy—poor Alice. As the hopeful words passed her lips a one-horse vehicle drove up to the door, and she saw Frank, muffled beyond any recognition but her own, sitting therein. She gave a little cry of delight.

"Good-bye, Mrs. Young," she said; "and thank you for your kindness when I was ill."

She ran downstairs and out of the house. The man leaned forward and helped her up beside him. Then the whirling wilderness of snow shut them from Mrs. Young's sight.

He did not speak one word. The wind and the snow were driving in their faces, rendering speech impossible. The morning light was still dull and pale—the city clocks were only striking eight as they quitted the Strand. He drove across one of the bridges, and out to some dismal waste ground in the neighbourhood of Battersea, a remote and forgotten tract, as wild, and lonely, and forsaken as an African desert. And here for the first time he spoke:

"There is something the matter with the horse," he said; "you must get out."

He sprang out himself and gave her his hand to descend. They were close upon some deserted brick fields, and he made a motion for her to follow him.

"Come out of the storm," he said; "there is a place of shelter near."

He seemed strangely familiar with the desolate locality.

He led her to a sort of dry ravine, so hidden away among rubbish and the debris of the forsaken brick yards as to render entering almost an impossibility. She shrank away in almost nameless fear.

"Frank!" she cried, in a frightened voice. "I can't go into this hideous place. Oh! good Heaven, Frank! what are you going to do?"

"To take your life—you foolish babbling!" he answered, in a horrible voice, between his clenched teeth. And before she could utter one word, one cry, there came a flash, a report—Alice fell like a stone at his feet!

There was a pause of a second. Had death been instantaneous? No. By a mighty effort she half raised herself, and clasped her arms around his knees.

"Frank!" she whispered, "Frank!" and the old deathless devotion looked out of her glazing eyes, "Frank—you have killed me—and I loved you so—I loved—you—so! Oh, Heaven, have mercy on me—and forgive—"

She fell down with the sentence unfinished—dead!

He knew she was dead. He dragged the body away into the darkest depth of the cavern, piled up the rubbish and heaps of waste bricks again. Thousands of people might pass that dreary tract and never notice this frightful place.

Then he was out again in the light of day, with the white snow whirling around him, and his horse standing with bowed head exactly as he had left him.

He glanced around. No living soul, far or wide, was to be seen. He looked at his watch—a quarter to nine. He was to breakfast at ten at the house of Sir Vane Charteris, and afterwards accompany the family to Essex. Time enough and to spare for all that.

He leaped in and drove away—drove furiously until the noise of the city life began to surge around him again; then he slackened his speed, and at half-past nine was changing his dress in his own luxurious, fire-lit rooms.

He felt neither sorrow, nor remorse, nor fear. Alice had been an obstacle in his way, and he had removed that obstacle. It was most improbable that the body would ever be found, or, if found, the deed ever traced to him.

He was free now to woo and win, in his own way, the bride upon whom he had set his heart. There was more of relief than any other feeling in his mind as he started, faultlessly dressed, for Berkeley Square.

"Now for my handsome, high-spirited Paulina!" he thought. "All things succeed with me, and so

shall this! In my vocabulary there's no such word as fail!"

#### CHAPTER XL.

At her chamber window, very early in the morning of that same stormy Christmas Eve, looking out at the whirling, fast-falling snow, stood Paulina.

Through the gray, chill light her face shone marble-white, marble-cold. Her lips were set in that hard line of iron resolution they could wear at times, and her sombre blue eyes looked straight before her at the storm-drifts.

The hour had come that was to witness the crowning recklessness of her impulsive life. The same defiant spirit that had long ago made her pass a night alone in the Haunted Grange and go to the picnic in male attire spurred her forward still.

During the day and the night that had gone she had not once thought of hesitating, of turning back. To falter irresolutely in any course, whether for good or bad, was not like Paulina.

Come weal, come woe, she would go straight on now to the end.

She was thinking this as she stood there, her heart full of bitterness and anger against the two men who had driven her to this last desperate step.

Mrs. Galbraith had brought her home from Twickenham, full of wonder and apprehension. What did that interview in the boudoir with Guy mean? With any other man it would have meant a proposal of marriage, but marriage and a ruined spendthrift were not to be connected together.

During the day and night that had followed Paulina had been ceaselessly watched. There was no knowing what such a girl might do. Paulina had laughed scornfully at the surveillance.

"What are you afraid of, Mrs. Galbraith?" she asked; "that I'll run away to America, or the antipodes, with Guy Earlscount? He hasn't asked me, though I should decidedly prefer it to the sort of life I have been leading lately."

Late in the evening of the night preceding this snowy morning she had spoken to her maid for the first time.

The girl, as I have said, was a well-trained English domestic, otherwise a human automaton, only hearing to obey. This girl, however, happened to be attached to her young mistress. With the princely spirit nature had given her, Paulina had been lavish of presents and gracious words, and the girl's heart was won.

"Jane," Miss Lisle said, "I want you to do me a great service, and, more, I want you to promise on oath never to reveal it to any human creature until I give you leave. Don't look frightened—I am not going to ask you to commit a crime, only to keep a secret. Are you willing to swear?"

Jane's curiosity was roused, but still she hesitated. "Of course I don't ask you to do me this favour for nothing," Miss Lisle went on. "What is done for nothing in this world, I wonder? You are engaged to a young man in Wales, I think you told me, and only waiting to save enough to be married. Do what I want to-day, and to-morrow I will give you three hundred pounds."

All Jane's scruples gave way at this magnificent offer—curiosity and cupidity combined were too much for her. She took the oath her mistress dictated, and then waited to hear what was to come.

"I am going to be married to-morrow morning," Jane, Miss Lisle went on. "A runaway match, remember, and you are to come with me and be one of the witnesses. That is all! Recollect, though, you are bound by oath never to speak of it to a living soul, unless some day, which is most unlikely, I should release you from your promise."

Jane pledged herself to obey—she was a subdued, reticent young woman, quite capable of keeping a secret, even without an oath. And then Paulina dismissed her and lay down, dressed as she was, to sleep.

Condemned criminals sleep on the night preceding execution—Paulina slept now deeply, dreamlessly. She had resolutely shut out thought from the first—she would not think, lest at the last hour she might falter and draw back. There was no alternative between this step and becoming the wife of Lord Montalien, she kept repeating to herself, and death was better than that.

Standing here now she drew forth her watch and looked at the hour. A quarter to eight. At this very moment, in a distant part of the city, Alice stood waiting for the man she loved. Jane entered the room on the instant with mantle and hat, dressed ready to quit the house.

"There's nobody up yet, Miss Paulina," she whispered. "Now is the time if we want to get away unseen. I beg your pardon, miss, but won't you change those black clothes? It's dreadful bad luck to be married in black."

Paulina laughed bitterly.

"If I wore crape from head to foot it would be the fittest attire for my wedding. Put them on, Jane, at once."

She had on a dress of soft, noiseless, black silk—the plainest in her wardrobe. The lady's-maid threw over her shoulders a black velvet mantle, with wide flowing sleeves, placed on the fair head a black hat, with a long black ostrich plume, and drew down a thick veil of black lace.

The girl finished her work, and regarded this sombre bride with almost a shudder.

"I'm a poor servant," she thought, "and I wouldn't be married in that suit for all Miss Lisle's great fortune."

"Five minutes to eight," Paulina said; "now then Jane, come."

She walked out of the room, down the stairs, along the front hall, and noiselessly opened the house door. The drifting snow, the bitter wind blew in her face, and seemed beating her back. For a moment she did pause, turning giddy and faint. Great Heaven! what was this she was about to do? Then the hated image of Lord Montalien rose before her—a vision of that dreary old house down on the Essex coast—and her last hesitation was over. She never paused or stopped to think again.

"There is the cab at the corner of the street," Jane said; "a four-wheeled cab, and—see—there is a gentleman waiting."

It was Guy, in furred cap and overcoat, pacing to and fro to keep himself warm. He espied them the instant they appeared and came rapidly forward.

"Punctual!" he said; "it is eight precisely, Miss Lisle. I hope you are well wrapped, the morning is bitter. Take my arm, the walking is dangerous."

She declined with a gesture—clinging to Jane.

"Go on, Mr. Earlscount; we will follow you."

He led the way to the cab, and held the door open for them to enter. Then he closed it, and sprang up beside the driver, solacing himself with a cigar.

Paulina shrank away in a corner of the cab, her veil held tightly over her face, her heart lying cold and leaden in her breast. Jane's quiet face betrayed none of her wonder at this strangely formed runaway match, where the bride declined taking the bridegroom's arm, and the bridegroom mounted up and rode beside the driver in the snow-storm.

They whirled rapidly along, they drove through interminable streets, until they reached the rear of Temple Bar. Once again Paulina looked at her watch; a quarter past eight, and the cab still flying along at a tremendous pace.

This part of London was as utterly strange to her as a desert. Were registrars' offices so few and far between, she wondered vaguely, that Mr. Earlscount need come all this way?

They stopped abruptly at last, the cab door opened, and Guy stood ready to help them out.

"This is the place," he said, briefly; "allow me."

He half lifted Paulina down, drew her hand within his arm, and led her up a flight of dark stairs, and into a dismal and grimy office, where a fire burned in a round stove, and a dirty little boy was sweeping.

"Where is Mr. Markham?" Guy asked the boy.

"Been called away sudden, sir. Left word, if a party came to be married he would be back in ten minutes, and you was to take a seat and wait."

He placed seats before the stove, staring hard at the lady dressed in black and closely veiled.

"Blessed if I ever see such a bride," he thought; "looks more like a funeral, I should say."

Mr. Earlscount placed Miss Lisle in a leather arm-chair in front of the stove.

"This delay is too bad," he said. "I saw the registrar yesterday, and he promised to be punctual. I hope you have not suffered from the cold, Miss Lisle?"

She was shivering even as he spoke, but scarcely with cold. She shrank from the sound of his voice, from the touch of his hand, with a feeling of intolerable shame. What must he think of her—a woman who had asked him to marry her, or as good?

Then profound silence fell upon the little room. The boy ceased his sweeping to stare; the cabman in the doorway shifted uneasily from one foot to the other.

Guy stood near the window, whistling softly and watching the whirling snow.

Jane sat feeling queer and agitated wondering how this gruesome wedding was going to end; and the bride elect, in her black drapery and veil, sat like a statue of dark marble, neither speaking nor moving.

Ten, fifteen, twenty minutes passed, and still no registrar.

It wanted but a quarter to nine now. Guy lost all patience at last.

"Confound the fellow!" he exclaimed, angrily; "what does he mean? He promised faithfully to be here at half-past eight, and now it is almost



nine. My lad, here's a crown for you—go and fetch him."

No need. The door opened on the instant, and a lively little red-faced man came in.

"Kept you waiting, sir? Ah!" as Guy answered, impatiently; "very sorry, but unavoidably detained. Now, then, if the lady will stand up, and the witnesses approach, we'll do your little job for you in a twinkling."

Her heart was throbbing with almost sickening rapidity now—throbbing so that she turned giddy and faint once more. She looked about her for a second with a wild instinct of flight, but it was too late. Guy had led her forward—how firm, how resolute his clasp seemed—and she was standing before the legal official, answering, as she was told to answer, and hearing Guy's clear, deep tones and a dreamy swoon. She heard, still faintly and far off, it seemed, the solemn words, "I pronounce you man and wife," and then she was signing her name in a big book, and feeling rather than seeing the little red-faced man staring at her curiously and knew that she was the wife of Guy Earls court.

The registrar placed a slip of paper in her hand. "Your marriage certificate, madam," he said, with a bow; "permit me to offer my congratulations, Mrs. Earls court."

There was a chair near—she grasped it to keep her from falling. The room's faces were dimly before her for a second, then by a great effort she mastered the dizzy feeling and stood erect. Guy was watching her; she shrank guiltily from his gaze. He was very grave, but as perfectly cool and collected as she had ever seen him in his most careless hours.

The clocks of the district were striking nine as they left the office and re-entered the cab; and once again Guy mounted to his seat with the driver, to face the December blasts and smoke a second consoling cigar. As before, Paulina sat in dead silence during the homeward drive.

Thirty minutes' rapid driving brought them to Berkeley Square. In front of Sir Vane Charteris's mansion the cab stopped and Mr. Earls court assisted them to alight. Then Paulina directly addressed him for the first time.

"I shall tell Sir Vane Charteris what has taken place the moment I enter," she hurriedly said; "and if you will call within an hour or so the other business of paying over the forty thousand pounds will be transacted."

"I will call," Guy answered, briefly, "if I may see you for a moment to say farewell."

She bent her head in token of assent, and flitted up the steps.

From the library window Sir Vane Charteris had watched the whole extraordinary proceeding, utterly astounded. What did it mean? Had this reckless girl outwitted them after all? He came forth into the hall. She flung back her veil for the first time, and met his angry, suspicious gaze with flashing, fearless eyes. The sight of him restored all her audacity, all her desperate courage and defiance. Weakness and faintness had wholly gone now.

"Miss Lisle," he demanded, sternly, "what does this mean?"

"Sir Vane Charteris," she retorted, meeting his swarthy frown without flinching, "it means that you are outwitted; vanquished, that you are no longer my tyrant, nor I your slave. It means that at last I am out of your power—that I am free!"

His dark face turned yellow with rage. As plainly as he ever understood it he divined on the instant what had taken place. She had married Guy Earls court.

"Go into the library," he said, briefly, and she went. He followed her, and closed the door. She stood before him proudly erect, her eyes alight—her haughty head thrown back; her resolute face white as death. "You have married Guy Earls court?"

"I have married Guy Earls court!"

And then, for fully five minutes, they stood face to face—as two combatants in a duel to the death. It was all over then—rage as he might—storm as he would—it was done and not to be undone. She was married and out of his power—her fortune her own—she could do nothing—nothing!

"I am married," Paulina said, her voice ringing hard and clear. "To escape one brother I have asked the other to marry me. You hear that, Sir Vane Charteris—asked him to marry me—driven to it by you and Lord Montalien. I overheard your plot to carry me off to 'The Firm,' and bury me alive there, until I should be forced into a marriage with a man I hate. Sir Vane Charteris, if there had been no other escape I would have escaped by death. Guy Earls court on the eve of his exile has married me, and freed me from your power."

"On the eve of his exile, Paulina! The husband of a lady worth eighty thousand pounds need hardly think of exile."

"No—in his place you certainly would not. Mr.

Earls court, however, happens to possess the manliness and generosity to leave me free in the hour that makes me his wife. Do you think, Sir Vane, I am going to let the world know my secret?—do you think I would have married Mr. Earls court if he had meant to remain in England? He has sworn never to betray the secret of our marriage, and he will keep his oath. In an hour he will be here, and you are to make over to him the half of my fortune—forty thousand pounds. In two days he leaves England, and—for ever."

She turned to quit the room—the bewildered baronet detained her.

"For Heaven's sake, Paulina, wait! I don't understand—I can't understand. Do you mean to say this marriage is no marriage? That Guy Earls court leaves you free and for ever? That he goes from England never to return while you remain here?"

"Precisely! You can't comprehend such generosity as that, can you? You would set very differently under the circumstances, and so would his immaculate brother, Lord Montalien. But there are men. This marriage shall never be made public if you keep the secret—my maid is sworn to secrecy, and I shall still be Miss Lisle and your ward in the eyes of the world. If, however, you prefer it otherwise—then I shall take care to show you as you are to society—a guardian so base, so tyrannical that he drove his ward to the maddest step ever woman took. Now choose!"

She stood before him in her beauty and her pride, more defiantly bright than he had ever seen her. He knew her well enough to know she would, to the letter, keep her word. He came forward suddenly, and took her hand.

"I will keep your secret, Paulina," he said; "and I beg you to forgive me if I have been harsh. I have been driven to it—I have indeed—I am in Lord Montalien's power, and he forced me to this. I will keep your secret—from him—from my sister—from the world. Let things go on as though this strange marriage had never taken place—you are free to do in all things as you will—in the eyes of society, your guardian still. I am sorry for the past; I can say no more. Paulina, will you try to forgive me?"

"I will try," she answered, bitterly, and gathering her mantle about her quitted the room.

She went up to her own, threw off her wraps, fell on her knees by the bedside, and buried her face in the satin coverlet. She shed no tears, though her heart was full; she only lay there—faint, tired, numb, as though she never cared to rise again.

No one disturbed her—the minutes went by—the morning with its life and bustle wore on. At half-past eleven Jane tapped at the door.

"If you please, Miss Paulina, Sir Vane sends his compliments, and would you step down to the library? Mr. Earls court is there."

She rose up—slowly—painfully, and went down. It was due to him she could go, but if he had only spared her this.

Sir Vane admitted her, and looked the door the instant she entered. Another figure—taller, slighter—stood leaning against the mantel staring moodily into the fire. At him Paulina did not dare to look.

"You told me, my dear," the baronet said, in his most kindly voice, "that Mr. Earls court was to accept half your fortune. There must be some mistake—he utterly refuses to do it."

She turned to him with startled eyes. Guy smiled.

"That part of the compact was not in the bond, at least. If I have served you I am content. I can only hope that the day may never come when you will regret more than you do at present this morning's work. For the money I distinctly refuse it. I have fallen very low; but I find there is still a lower depth than that to which I have sunk. To accept your generous offer would be a degradation you must permit me to decline. I leave England in two days for ever, in all human probability; but if at the other side of the world the day comes when my wrecked fortunes are retrieved, and I can return with honour, I will return. That, too, was not in the bond."

She looked at him—trembling white to the lips.

"You will return!" she slowly repeated.

"If I can, with credit to myself—with my debts paid—most certainly. But you need have no fear, I will keep my oath. Never, come what may in the future, shall I betray your secret. Whether oceans divide us, or we stand side by side again, will make no difference. If I have saved you from my half-brother I am satisfied—I ask no more. And now, Paulina, for the sake of old times say 'Farewell and good speed' before I go."

He held out his hand, the smile that lit it into such rare beauty bright on his face and in his eyes. He stood before her, handsomer, nobler than any man she ever beheld, in his generous renunciation, his self-sacrifice, and her heart went out to him—in that moment she knew that she loved the man she had married.

She gave him her hand, her proud head drooping in an agony of shame, of remorse, of pity, of tenderness. If her life had depended on it she could not have spoken even the "good speed" he asked. Her fingers, icy cold, were clasped for a second in his warm, firm grasp—one half-sad, half-smiling look from the brown eyes, then she had fled from the room.

They had parted, perhaps for ever, and in the hour that she lost him she knew that she loved him with a love that would last a life. She was his wife, but she would have died a thousand deaths rather than say "Guy, don't go!" and she knew how utterly unavailing the words would have been if she could have crushed down her woman's pride and spoken them. It was as fixed as fate that he should go. So she had taken her leap in the dark, taken it blindly, desperately, to save herself from a worse fate. The hour of her bridehood was the hour of her widowhood; in the fullest sense of the words she was wedded, yet no wife!

Two days afterwards the "Oneida" steamed down the Solent from Southampton, bearing away to his long exile Guy Earls court.

## CHAPTER XLI.

It was a hot night in Virginia.

Up and down a long, bare-looking room an officer paced restlessly, his hands crossed behind him, his brow bent, his eyes fixed on the floor. The room was the private apartment of the officer commanding the cavalry division stationed for the time at this outpost, and the officer was Colonel Hawksley. He was a very tall, very fair man, with a face so thoroughly Saxon that all the bronze of foreign suns could not hide his nationality. He had dark, close-cropped, brown hair, a magnificent tawny beard and moustache, and eyes blue and bright as the sky without. He was a man of six-and-forty, magnificently proportioned—a model for an athletic Apollo—looking younger than his years, despite the silver threads streaking his brown hair and the deep lines that care or thought had ploughed along his broad brow.

Up and down, up and down, Colonel Hawksley paced, with that thoughtful frown, for upwards of an hour.

"Who is he?" he muttered, half aloud; "what is he to her? If anything, why is he here?—if nothing, how came he by her picture? The night is fine; he has sufficiently recovered to walk over. I have half a mind to send for him, restore him his property, and ask—"

He stopped to glance out at the night. The great, bright stars blazed in a cloudless sky, not a breath of air stirred the hot stillness—it was certainly quite fine enough for anyone to venture out. The colonel rang a hand-bell with a look of decision. An orderly appeared.

"Go to the hospital, and request Lieutenant Earls court, if quite able, to wait upon me here."

The soldier touched his cap and withdrew.

The colonel glanced at a little package lying upon the table. It was a gold repeater, set with jewels, and hanging from the slender gold chain was a locket of rare beauty and workmanship. The officer took up this locket, touched the spring, and looked long and earnestly at the face within. A beautiful and noble face, and a graceful, girlish throat—the photograph of Paulina Lisle.

"What is he to her?—how comes he to wear her portrait? Does he know?—but of course he doesn't! It is strange—strange."

It was somewhat. The circumstances were these: A battle had taken place five weeks before; and during the heat of the engagement Colonel Hawksley's attention had been attracted by a young officer of his own troop, whose cool courage and superb fighting rendered him conspicuous even in that hour. The battle had raged from early morning until dark, and all day long, where the fire was hottest and the blows fell thickest, the dark face and tall form of Lieutenant Guy Earls court had been foremost. And, at last, as victory turned in their favour, half a dozen tremendous blows aimed at him at once had hurled him from his saddle. "Killed," the colonel thought, with a passing pang of regret beyond doubt.

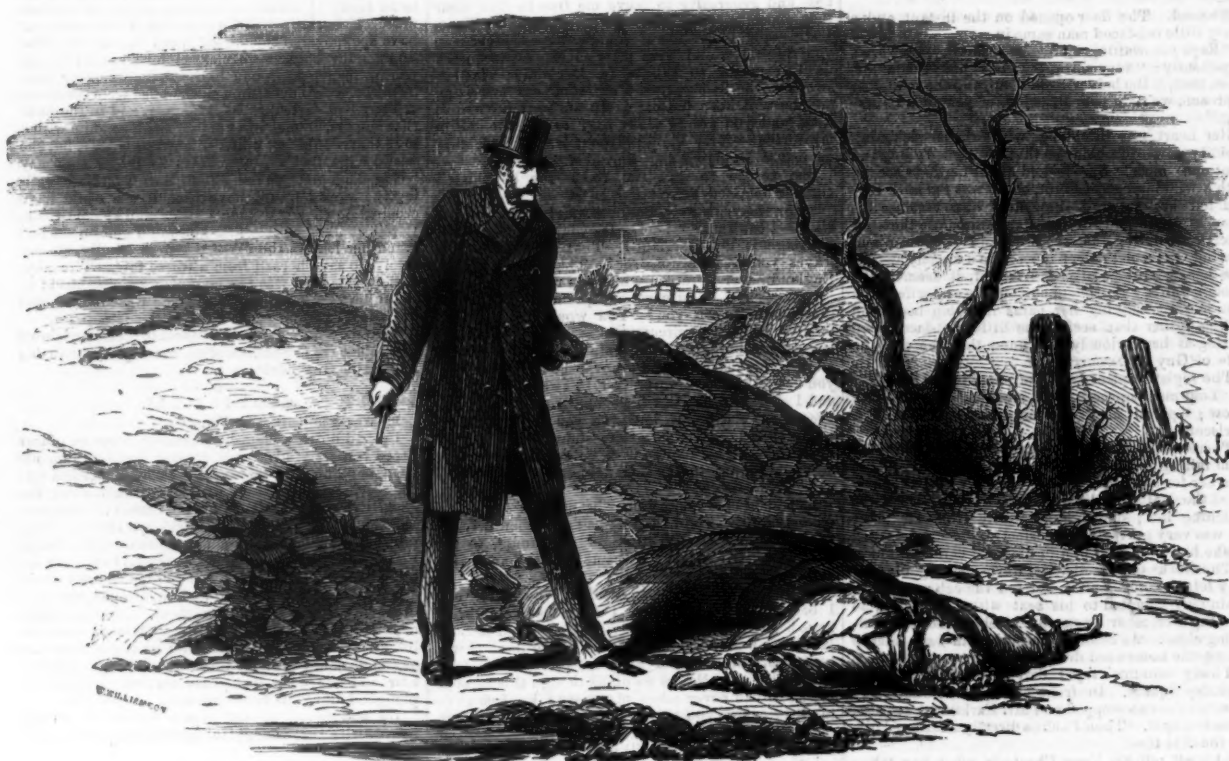
It looked like it when they carried his senseless form into the hospital, and among the list of "killed" returned after the fray was the name of "Lieutenant Guy Earls court." But he had not died.

Covered with wounds from head to foot, there was not, as it turned out, one of them mortal, not even very dangerous.

In five weeks Lieutenant Earls court was able to quit his bed, and walk about for a few moments at a time in the hospital yard.

On the day succeeding the battle, while he still lay senseless, his colonel had visited the hospital expressly to make inquiries after him.

The young man had fought so daringly, his coolness had been so remarkable, and something in his



[THE MURDER]

general air and manner marked him different from his comrades.

He lay terribly like death now, but the rare beauty of his face, that had made him the pet of bondmaids in another land—that had made scores of high-born beauties smile upon him—was unmarred still.

Whiter, colder than marble he lay—the breath scarce stirring his bloodless lips.

"Poor lad," Colonel Hawksley said, looking down upon him with real regret, "he fought like a lion yesterday. Who is he, and where does he belong?"

No one knew. Except his name, and that he had entered the ranks as a private, there was simply nothing whatever known of his story.

"Look here, colonel," the nurse said, "this belongs to him, and should be taken care of until we see if the poor fellow recovers. His name is on it—engraved here on the case."

She handed him the gold watch and chain and locket. Either intentionally or by accident, she touched the spring in handling it, and the locket flew open.

Colonel Hawksley, with a startled exclamation, caught it up, and looked in amazement upon his daughter's fair, proud face.

It was a vignette of Paulina Lisle beyond a doubt. He wore one near his own heart—a later picture, in which the exquisite face looked older, graver, less brightly smiling than in this—but the same.

This stranger was an Englishman then, and had known Paulina.

He examined the watch closely. Beside his name it bore the crest of a noble house—a mailed hand and the motto "Semper Fidelis."

Colonel Hawksley's interest deepened to intense curiosity.

Who was this young man who had entered the ranks of their army as a common soldier, and wore his daughter's picture and the crest of an English nobleman?

"He looks like an Englishman in spite of his olive skin and jet black hair and moustache. Heaven send him a speedy recovery, or I shall perish miserably of curiosity."

The colonel's prayer was heard; Lieutenant Earls court's recovery was astonishing in its rapidity, considering his dozen wounds.

On this night suspense was to be borne no longer, and Colonel Hawksley had despatched the orderly to summon the invalid hero to his presence.

Fifteen minutes wore away; then the orderly's knock came to the door.

"Come in!" the colonel cried, flinging himself for the first time into a chair, and the door opened, and

Lieutenant Earls court stood before him with a military salute.

"You sent for me, colonel?"

"I did, sir. Come in and take a seat, you are unfit to stand. I trust there has been no imprudence in your venturing into the night air?"

"None whatever, colonel, I am happy to say; my scratches are pretty well healed—I shall be fit for service again in a week."

The colonel smiled; he liked the bold, soldierly spirit—he liked the look and manner of the man altogether.

"Hardly, I fear," he said.

Indeed the lieutenant, with his arm in a sling, and his dark face still terribly thin and bloodless, did hardly look like it.

"I have been very anxious for your recovery, Lieutenant; that we can't spare so brave a fellow for one reason—that I want most anxiously to ask you a few questions for another."

The wounded lieutenant listened in grave silence. He had taken a seat at the desire of his officer, and the lamp-light fell full upon his handsome, pallid face, while that of the elder man was in the shadow. What does it matter now whether they wore the blue or the gray?—they were both Englishmen, and fought for the cause with which their sympathies lay.

"I have a portion of your property in my possession," continued Colonel Hawksley, "given in charge to me on the day after the battle. Permit me to return it to you, and to own that, by the merest chance, I saw and recognized the face you wore in that locket."

Guy Earls court took his property. To be very much surprised at anything would have been in direct opposition to all the codes of his life. His face betrayed none whatever now.

"Recognized it, did you? I shouldn't have thought that. A very handsome face, colonel—is it not?"

Colonel Hawksley produced from an inner pocket a photograph, and handed it to him.

"I received this from England some three months ago. The face you wear is younger, but the same."

Guy Earls court looked long and earnestly at this second picture—of what he felt his calm face showing no sign whatever.

It was Paulina, six years older than when he had seen her last, more beautiful in her stately womanhood even than the bright, girlish face and form he remembered so well.

He handed it back with a bow and smile.

"Years mar some of us; they but add to Paulina Lisle's crown of beauty. It's six years since I saw

her, and she has changed; but I should recognize that face anywhere. It is not the kind of face one sees every day."

His colonel watched him as he spoke—keenly—closely—but his serene countenance kept his secrets if he had them, well.

"Mr. Earls court," he said, abruptly, "I am going to ask you seemingly a very impertinent question, which, of course, you are at liberty to answer or not as you choose. What is Paulina Lisle to you?"

Guy smiled—perfectly unembarrassed.

"An acquaintance, colonel, whom I met in all about half a dozen times in my life, who doesn't in the least know that I have the audacity to wear her picture. I was guilty of petty larceny—abstracted it from a friend's album on the eve of my departure from England. I admired Miss Lisle very much, as all men must who have the happiness of knowing her, and I fancied I could not bring with me to my exile a fairer memento of the life I left. That is the history of her picture in my locket."

With the infinite calm which nature and habit both had given him, he replaced the watch in his belt and waited quietly for his companion to speak.

"And this is all?" Colonel Hawksley said. "I fancied you might have been—"

"A discarded lover? No, colonel, I never was that. Miss Lisle, with her great beauty, and her great fortune, was altogether above my humble reach. One might as soon love some bright particular star, etc."

"Above your reach—and you wear the crest of a noble house?"

"A whim, perhaps—like wearing Miss Lisle's portrait."

"You are an Englishman, at least."

"Undoubtedly, colonel."

"May I ask how many years since you first came to this country?"

"Six years precisely, next January."

"I am afraid my questions are intrusive—impertinent perhaps; but I am an Englishman myself, and, somehow, I feel a singular interest in you. You remind me—your voice—your manner—of one whom I knew twenty-two years ago. I wonder if you knew him—he was a man of rank—Lord Mont-alien."

His lieutenant looked at the speaker suddenly with a new interest—a new intelligence in his glance. At the mention of his father's name all became clear. Why, the very name of Hawksley might have told him, taken in connection with the recognition of Paulina's picture—this man was her father!

(To be continued.)





[CRIS TURNER'S LITTLE GAME.]

## BREAKING THE CHARM.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

*"Tempting Fortune," "Scarlet Berries," &c., &c."*

## CHAPTER XXIII.

"Tis strange to think how woman's wit  
Will often make a lucky hit.      Gay.

In a few days Philip Mallison was obliged to go to London to attend to business connected with his property, and not until he had gone did the countenance of the duke brighten.

It was evident to Milly that the duke cared for her, and she was flattered at the preference he gave her. It was impossible that she could love him in return, for girls never really love suitors who are three times their own age. Her regard for him was that of a daughter for an affectionate father or uncle, but at the same time she reflected that if the duke declared his passion and made her an offer of marriage the position within her grasp would be a splendid one.

She was not dissatisfied with her lot, and rather wished that her life might glide on undisturbed, without his grace rendering it necessary for her to make a choice between splendid misery and poor but happy dependence.

As a matter of course, the servants in the castle did not hesitate to speak of the duke's tender manner towards his young and agreeable companion.

Mrs. Cotteram, in her position of housekeeper, thought it consistent with her dignity to say nothing, but she thought all the more deeply.

Cris Turner, the steward, as the secret champion of Lord Cardington's interests, was equally alarmed, and thought affairs had gone far enough to allow him to speak to the housekeeper and propose an alliance, offensive and defensive, against Milly.

He accordingly paid Mrs. Cotteram a visit in her private room, and she, guessing what he had come about, received him more graciously than was her custom, for a certain jealousy and dislike had for years existed between the steward and herself.

They had a bond of union at last.

This was their common danger while Milly remained an inmate of the ducal household, and they felt that she must be got rid of at all hazards.

"I want to consult you, ma'am," began the steward, "respecting the rumours which are afloat in the servants' hall."

"Upon what subject, Mr. Turner?" replied Mrs. Cotteram, pretending to be ignorant of his meaning.

"The subject is a delicate one, I admit, but it must be grappled with. Grappled is the word, I think, Mrs. Cotteram?"

"I have no objection to it, sir," she replied. "Whenever a danger confronts me I look at it boldly in the face."

"Right, ma'am. That shows the proper spirit," exclaimed the steward; "and I will not beat about the bush any longer. For some months past a young lady—"

"Person, you mean, Mr. Turner. You should say person if you are alluding to a companion sent down here by his grace's solicitor," interrupted Mrs. Cotteram.

"I stand corrected. This person has contrived to acquire considerable influence over the duke, who, as we all know, is old and weak, if not imbecile."

"Decidedly imbecile, I should say," replied the housekeeper; "and before the arrival of Miss Haines he was as docile as a lamb. I could do anything, and now I get my nose snapped off if I venture to suggest anything which is displeasing to his companion. It is a state of things which requires very serious discussion, and I am glad that you have thought fit to broach the subject. We are the heads of this household, and, having his grace's interest at heart, it is our—our—"

"Duty," supplied Cris Turner.

"Thank you. It is our duty, Mr. Turner, to protect the aged duke from the designs of a penniless adventuress."

"Capital," cried the steward. "You have hit the nail on the head and driven it home, ma'am."

Mrs. Cotteram went to her store cupboard and produced a bottle of wine and two glasses, which she placed upon the table. The steward politely poured some out, and they drank to one another.

"Talking's dry work," said the housekeeper. "I hope you will excuse the absence of ceremony, Mr. Turner. As we were conversing confidentially I did not think it worth while to ring for a servant."

"Don't mention it," replied Mr. Turner. "Servants are a worry when one is engaged in business. Capital tittle this," he added, smacking his lips. "Some of the old Madeira. I did not know there was much left in the cellar."

"Nor is there," answered Mrs. Cotteram. "The butler informed me that only six dozen remain, and this I had brought up here and stored in that cupboard. His grace has often asked if it is all gone. A drop of this is comforting at times. You can't get such wine now. Neither love nor money will buy it."

"It is something like," said Cris Turner. "But, as the French say, let us return to our muttons."

Mrs. Cotteram laughed, and he laughed too. They were both becoming good-humoured, and waxing

confidential under the influence of the duke's old Madeira.

"Ah, Mrs. Cotteram!" exclaimed the steward, laying his hand on his heart and sighing deeply. "If I were only a younger man."

"Younger, Mr. Turner?" replied the housekeeper. "If you call yourself old where shall we look for young men?"

"You flatter me. 'Pon honour, you pay me a compliment, for I am fifty if I am a day."

"Prime of life, Mr. Turner. A man doesn't know his own mind till he is fifty. Nor a woman either. Ah! It was a sad day for me when I married Cotteram. Poor fellow! How a casual remark carries one back years and years."

Mrs. Cotteram raised her handkerchief to her eyes.

"Don't, ma'am, I beg of you," cried Mr. Turner. "It is too affecting. The late lamented Mr. Cotteram has gone to his rest."

"Ah," said the housekeeper, looking up. "He was good company, and much sought after, but he was not a kind husband, and when he was found dead in the cellar one morning—apoplexy, Mr. Turner—apoplexy—with a rat sitting on his waistcoat, I was not so much shocked as some would say I ought to have been."

"You'll marry again, ma'am, that's what you'll do," said the steward, rubbing his hands and helping himself to another glass of the old Madeira, as he remarked: "Permit me."

"Not I," replied Mrs. Cotteram, with a toss of the head.

"You will, ma'am. Excuse my rudeness in contradicting you, but you will. You're young-looking, you're buxom. You've got the manners of a lady born. You've got money put by. You'll take some one in your own sphere of life, who has also been prudent and saved a tidy little sum, then you'll start in the public line, with a present from the duke, or perhaps a pension, and end your days in comfort."

"It's a pretty picture, but who would have me?" said Mrs. Cotteram, casting down her eyes.

"Who wouldn't? Hundreds would jump at you, ma'am."

"Ah, well, we shall see," said the housekeeper, with a pleasant glance at the steward. "But at present we've got to think of something besides taverns. We are none of us safe if the duke should be so foolish in his old age as to make a nobody his duchess."

"That's just it. That's where it is," replied the steward, quickly. "It's the nobodies I object to. They have never been accustomed to money, and they consider a proper expenditure extravagance."

Now, if Miss Haines should become mistress here, she'd begin by cutting everything down. She'd cut me down. She'd cut you down, ma'am."

"I wouldn't stand it. I'd go."

"You'd lose your prospect of a pension and a good berth. No. We must put a stop to it, and I will confess that I've written to Lord Cardington, acquainting him with the facts of the case."

"He's a bad man, and I should not like to see him in the duke's confidence. He'd make ducks and drakes of everything, and we should come to the hammer, as the saying is."

"I don't want him to come in as master any more than I wish Miss Haines to become mistress. All I want is for Lord Cardington to get her out, and if his invention can't do it nobody's can," replied Chris Turner.

"As far as I am concerned I am sure I will help you cordially," said Mrs. Cotteram.

"His lordship has made an appointment with me at the park gates this day."

"In reply to your letter?"

"Yes. I will tell him that we are all with him, and that he may count upon our support," continued Turner.

There was a gentle tap at the door, and Milly exclaimed:

"May I come in?"

Mrs. Cotteram looked sternly at her, and, inflamed by the wine she had taken, her long-pent-up resentment at the poor girl's success broke forth.

"I should think," she rejoined, "that any lady who is a lady would retire when she sees that another lady is engaged."

"Indeed," said Milly, "I am very sorry if I have intruded; but I thought you were alone, and did not know that you talked to gentlemen in your private room."

"The impudence of this creature!" cried Mrs. Cotteram. "Mr. Turner, it is for you to refute this odious calumny."

The steward rose, and, looking insolently at Milly, said:

"I am one of the gentlemen of the household—steward, in fact—and business necessitated my coming to Mrs. Cotteram. That's why I'm here, and that's all about it. If you can make anything out of that you're welcome to try."

Milly flushed and breathed heavily.

"I beg you will not talk to me in that way," she exclaimed.

"Oh! You're not mistress here yet," retorted the steward.

Turning her back to him, Milly, addressing the housekeeper, said:

"What is this man's name?"

"The gentleman of whom you speak in such disrespectful terms," cried Mrs. Cotteram, "has been fifteen years steward in this household, and his name is—"

"Chris Turner. I'm not ashamed of it," put in the steward.

"Very well. Tell Mr. Turner to leave this room," cried Milly, angrily.

"Perhaps you'd better do so yourself," answered Mrs. Cotteram.

"Are you speaking to me?" asked the astonished girl.

"Yes, to you. We've had enough of your nonsense. You're only a servant like ourselves, and we consider ourselves a great deal better than you, I can tell you. These apartments are mine."

"But," said Milly, who could scarcely believe the evidence of her senses, "you told me I might come here whenever I liked, and have always been so very friendly. What am I to understand?"

"That you are not liked in this house, and if you consult your own comfort you will look out for another situation."

Mrs. Cotteram did not know that Milly was a girl of spirit.

This speech completely roused all Milly's dormant pride, and, looking defiantly at the housekeeper, while she continued to keep her back to the steward, whom she purposely entirely ignored, said:

"Very well. I am prepared to meet you on your own ground. This insolence I can never forget or forgive. You do not realize the difference between us. We shall see who will be the first to leave this house."

With this she quitted the room, without eliciting any response from her antagonists, whom she had slightly disconcerted by her bold and resolute demeanour.

They had not expected being replied to in such a manner, and regarded one another blankly.

#### CHAPTER XXIV.

When Greek meets Greek then comes the tug of war.

Translation.

"Well, I never!" ejaculated Mrs. Cotteram.

"The war's begun," said the steward.

"There's a determined hussy for you. I did not think she had so much of the tiger-cat in her. It's lucky we tackled her in time, and I don't think she'll do herself much good by defying us. The duke likes us too well. If she should complain we'll say something about her. He'll believe us in the end."

"She's got a spirit," remarked Chris Turner, who could not help admiring Milly's firm manner.

"We must be on our guard. However, I trust when you see Lord Cardington to-day you will devise some means of getting the girl out of the house. Anything you suggest to me I will gladly do."

"Right, ma'am," replied Turner. "You can leave everything to me with certain safety."

"One glass more, Mr. Turner."

"I don't mind if I do, and here's your health, ma'am, and long life to you. He'll be a lucky man who gets you."

The steward drank, and Mrs. Cotteram simpered. He took his leave, and muttered as he went out of the room:

"I think I've humbugged the old girl pretty well, considering we haven't been the best of friends for some years past. She sees the danger ahead, though, as well as I, and that makes us work together. It's odd what a long way a little flattery will go with a woman, young or old."

In the meantime Milly had made her way to the duke's apartments.

She had no idea of being alighted by the upper servants, and determined she would quit the house at once rather than submit to it.

That the Duke of Lowes liked her society and would not submit to her going away she had little doubt.

She had been playing and stinging to the duke, and he was walking on the terrace. His eyes were red with falling tears, and his face hot and flushed. His grace remarked this at once, and exclaimed on his advance to meet her:

"What is this? Crying, my birdie?"

He always addressed her now as "Birdie," when in a good humour. It was a term of affectionate endearment.

"I have been insulted," replied Milly, sobbing.

"By whom?" he demanded.

"By two of your grace's servants, the housekeeper and the steward. They are jealous because you like me, and they told me I should go away."

"Go away! Monstrous odd that they should dare to hint at such a thing. Lose my little birdie! No, no, no!" rejoined the Duke of Lowes, impatiently.

"I said nothing to provoke the outburst," continued Milly, "and they told me I was not mistress here yet."

"Oh! They said that, did they? Perhaps they think I am old and foolish. It is a bad plan to keep servants too long. When they assume the place of their employer it is time to get rid of them. They shall go."

"I do not want them so severely punished as that. If they will beg my pardon, and promise to be more respectful in future I will forgive them, but it is so hard in my friendless position to be treated in this way," exclaimed Milly.

The duke raised her hand to his lips and kissed it tenderly, saying:

"Poor little birdie, the hawks shall not come into its nest, and ruffle its pretty feathers. Stay you here, I will see to it all."

He walked hastily into the house, and Milly sat down upon a seat on the terrace, smiling through her tears. She felt that she had triumphed, and though she was not a revengeful girl it was a source of satisfaction to her to feel this.

The duke entered the library and rang the bell furiously.

A footman answered the imperative summons and was told to send Mrs. Cotteram up directly.

The footman sought the housekeeper with a grin on his face. Never had he seen his grace in such a passion before.

"What is it, James?" asked Mrs. Cotteram, uneasily.

"Please, ma'am, you've got to be carpeted. The duke's waiting upstairs for you in an awful rage. Send Mrs. Cotteram up directly," says he," replied the footman.

"Very well, we shall see," exclaimed the housekeeper, setting her teeth together and adjusting her hair before the glass.

Women will put their hair straight under any circumstances; if it was a matter of life and death they would stop to have a look in the glass before they went in public.

The duke was pacing the room impatiently his frame trembling with rage. For once he was determined to assert his authority.

"Did you send for me, your grace?" cried Mrs. Cotteram, pausing respectfully on the threshold of the open door.

"Did I send for you, woman?" cried the duke. "Perhaps you will pretend you don't know why I sent for you, and what you have done."

"I am not aware that I have done anything improper of which I ought to be ashamed, or for which I should incur your displeasure, my lord," replied the housekeeper.

"Oh, you don't, eh? Is it nothing to grossly insult a young lady who while under my roof has a right to claim my protection?"

"If I had known that Miss Haines was under your grace's protection," said Mrs. Cotteram, laying an unpleasant stress on the word, "I—"

"Silence, woman," thundered the duke. "You shall not flout me. Pack up your traps! Out of this house, this minute!"

"Allow me to say one word in vindication of my conduct," exclaimed Mrs. Cotteram, turning pale.

"Well?" he ejaculated.

"I have served your grace faithfully for many years, and if it does seem hard that I should be turned off at a moment's notice because a girl who is nobody knows who should go and tell tales and make complaints."

"I know all about her. Be off!"

"Consider my position, my lord. You will not find so many servants as a hurry. I have always had your grace's interest at heart, and I will speak if I die first. That girl is a disgusting creature."

"Out of my house!" vociferated the duke, raising his arm as if he had aimed to strike her.

"The point," continued Mrs. Cotteram, whose temper was aroused, "she has a claim on your grace—she wants you to marry her, and if it was an evil hour when she entered this house, an old man who marries a young girl, who is, as I said before, nobody knows who, is sure to repent before he dies."

"Be off!" cried the duke, holding the door open.

"I'll have no more conversation with you. Make out your account. I'll pay you instead of notice. Leave this house in an hour! What! am I to be debarred from my own castle by one of my pampered and overpaid servants? You've had your own way all of you till, by Heaven! you think the whole place belongs to you; but I'll have a change. Be off; and send that rascally fellow, the steward—what's his name?—Turner; send Turner to me."

Mrs. Cotteram in vain endeavoured to say something more in her defence. She had adopted the wrong plan, however; for she had allowed her temper to get the better of her, and by attempting to defend herself and justify her conduct she had only been throwing oil upon the coals and making the fire burn fiercer.

She experienced some slight pleasure in knowing that she had a companion in misfortune, and that she had saved money enough while in her master's service to make her independent of the world—for a time at least.

The duke paced the room again in the same agitated manner.

Turner entered with his hat in his hand.

"Make out your bill," exclaimed his grace; "you quit my service at once."

"Leave, my lord!" exclaimed Turner; "may I ask what I have done to cause your grace's displeasure?"

"I'll have no argument with you, nor enter into any explanation. Ask yourself—question your friend, and accomplice—Cotteram."

"But—"

"What! are you going to lay down the law to me? Monstrous odd," said the duke. "I don't know what servants are coming to now-a-days. If I don't want you any longer will you tell me of any law which compels me to keep you?"

"Certainly not, your grace."

"I find I have been keeping an auger stable, and I am determined to cleanse it. Thank goodness it is not a labour of Hercules. It is easily done, but my eyes have been opened not a moment too soon. Be off and send your bill in."

Turner, thus discharged, took himself off very much crestfallen and sought Mrs. Cotteram in the housekeeper's room. The reaction had come now, and she was crying.

"I've got the sack as well as you, ma'am," he exclaimed.

"It's a pretty state of things," replied Mrs. Cotteram. "It's a pity we said anything to the trumpet now; we should have done ourselves more good if we'd have kept our mouths shut."

"That's true enough, but it's no use crying over spilt milk," said the steward, throwing himself into a chair and kicking his feet out restlessly.

"We've lost a good berth, Mr. Turner, and I'll have my revenge upon the lady who caused us to be turned out like this."

"So will I, you may take your Bible oath of that, ma'am. Still, it's a case of step it. I never saw the old man in such a state before. I thought he'd have knocked me down."



There was no time to be lost, so they sat down and made out their accounts, which they sent in to his grace, not daring to face him a second time.

"I never thought he had it in him," remarked the steward when he folded up the sheet of paper.

"Nor I," answered Mrs. Cotteram, doing the same thing. "But there is no telling what an old lunatic will do when he's in love; an infatuated old man is always worse than a young one, and this girl has bewitched him. I saw how it would be weeks ago. Last night I had a bad dream. I thought I was struggling in muddy water. Muddy enough, is it not?"

"We will endeavour to live through it. Keep up your courage and put a good face on it, my'am; our turn will come yet—mark my words."

"I hope sincerely you will be a true prophet."

"I can see as far through a brick wall as most people. We are discharged, that's a fact, and a solemn one too. But no matter; let me hear what Lord Cardington has to say. Her ladyship won't sit on the throne long, and she is not married yet."

"You put new life into me, Mr. Turner," said Mrs. Cotteram. "There is my account; will you send that into the bear's den with yours?"

"Certainly, with pleasure," said Mr. Cris-Turner, going away for that purpose.

While the unhappy victims of his displeasure were thus engaged the duke had returned to Milly, who was once more radiant and smiling.

"I have done it, birdie," he said; "they are both discharged, and will leave in an hour. I sent them off with a flea in each ear, as people say."

"They will be more vindictive than ever, will they not?" said Milly.

"What can they do? If they remained in the house, dear birdie, they might annoy you, but I have sent them away so that they should have no opportunity whatever of causing you the least uneasiness," said his grace of Lewes.

"How can I thank you for your kindness, my lord?" said Milly, regarding him gratefully.

"Tut, tut, I have only done what any gentleman ought to do under the circumstances. You are a good girl, and must be protected. I have no idea of allowing my servants to forget their position and become insolent. The fact is I have for years been too easy with them."

"I have endeavoured to do my duty to the best of my ability, and I am glad to think that I have succeeded in securing your approbation," said Milly.

"You have, my dear, and I will make you housekeeper if you will accept the position. You will have time to attend to me. They said you were not yet mistress, but you shall be."

Milly hesitated.

She thought that if she did eventually marry the duke people envious of her good fortune would declare that he had married his housekeeper.

That he should marry his amanuensis was a different thing altogether. She felt that she was in an anomalous position. This had never occurred to her before.

Either she ought to induce the duke to make her an offer, or she should leave his house. Mrs. Cotteram's dismissal was in one sense a misfortune to her.

A young lady like herself could not continue to remain in his grace's household on the same terms as formerly after what had occurred.

She was in a false position.

"Much as I appreciate your grace's kindness to me on all occasions," she said, "I think it would be best for both of us that I should leave you!"

"Nonsense!" said the duke. "I cannot consent to lose you, birdie."

"But consider, my lord, what a censorious world will say."

"Let it say what it chooses."

"I have a character at stake!"

"What do you want me to do?" said the duke, in perplexity. "You know that you are dear to me, and that you have made yourself necessary to my existence."

Milly made no answer.

The duke came close to her, and, laying his hand upon her shoulder as she sat on the rustic seat on the terrace, he continued:

"Will you become yet dearer to me? In a word, Milly, will you be my wife?"

"Your grace does me too much honour!" replied Milly, while her heart beat quickly. "I should be no fit mate for you. Consider the difference in our position. You are rich and great and titled, I poor and friendless."

"Not while I live, birdie!"

"You might regret it."

"Never! I care little for the world; all my life I have defied it, and lived in an eccentric manner. You must be my bride. I have had this in my mind for a long time, but forbore to say it, not knowing the reception I should meet with. Do you not like me well enough to be my wife, Milly?"

She hung down her head, while her sweet face was suffused with blushes.

"I know you to be good and virtuous," continued the duke. "Where could I find a more congenial spirit? You shall be my wife, birdie, and I hope you will never regret consenting to become Duchess of Lewes."

This was indeed a proud moment in Milly's life, and in her heart she did like the duke. The only question she debated in her mind was whether she liked him well enough to marry him. What a triumph it would be over Lord Cardington! How independent of every one would it make her!

But she would not decide in a hurry.

"Give me a day or two to commune with my own mind, my lord. Let me think your proposal over in secret. I would never marry you from mercenary motives, for I would rather kill myself than cause you one moment's uneasiness. You shall not regret your good nature; I feel that your love is worth having. It is a prize not to be toyed with lightly. In three days I will give you an answer. I ask for this delay because your offer was so totally unexpected by me. Will you meet my wishes in this respect?" she said.

"My darling," answered the duke, "do with me as you like. You are the queen of my heart; to you my homage and allegiance are due."

"May I leave you now?" she asked, looking up in his fine, aristocratic face with a sweet and winning smile. "I want to be alone, and to think over all this sudden love and good fortune."

"Go, my pretty one—go," the duke said, "and try to think of me as well as you can. I know I am an old man and have my faults. I am sure I am not good enough for a dear, sweet little pet like you, but if you would make my home a heaven on earth for the few years I have to live how glad I should be!"

Again he seized her hand and kissed it rapturously.

Milly rose, and, gathering up her skirts, gave him an affectionate look as she glided into the castle by a side door.

She had indeed triumphed over her enemies, for there was no doubt now that the Duke of Lewes was desperately in love with her.

She had the ball at her foot.

The tide of her affairs was at its flood, and, if she took it, she would be led on to fortune.

But there were sinister influences at work against her of which she did not dream.

Of these we shall speak shortly.

(To be continued.)

## THE MYSTIC EYE OF HEATHCOTE.

### CHAPTER. XLIII.

NURSE SEATON raised the terrified Lady Grace from the ground, and laid her on the couch in the kitchen corner, then she put on her spectacles and took up the paper herself. A few brief glances told her the whole story, and a dreadful story it was.

"Great Heaven!" she cried, "this is more of their work—the poor lad's innocent, I could stake my life on that—and poor Hendrick too! Merciful heavens! will justice never be done? Shall the wicked always triumph? But I must go now. I'll face them and accuse them of their crimes. They can't deny what they have done. Here, Elizabeth, come and help me with Lady Grace."

Janet's pale-faced mother came, and the grocer's boy, picking up his paper that had wrought such mischief, departed in wide-eyed amazement.

Before the wintry noon had passed Lady Grace lay in her darkened room, stricken down with brain fever, and poor old Margaret, with her heart bleeding, consigning her to her sister's care, took the early train for Yorkshire.

Meanwhile Janet was steaming over the snowy hills on her journey to Cornwall with the old opal ring hidden away in her bosom.

She was going down to confer with her mother, and to test the truth of those vague words with which Carlos Brignoli had answered her.

He had said that Margaret Seaton was down in Cornwall; and, although it seemed like folly to credit such a wild assertion, still the girl could not rest till she assured herself whether it was true or false.

So she sat in her snug corner, closely wrapped in her heavy mantle, and pressed her anxious face against the window, watching the flying hills impatiently, and praying within herself that the train would go faster.

In the seat directly opposite sat a dark-faced man, with a shaggy coat, and a slouch-hat that half concealed his heavy brows. His eyes were peculiarly sharp and cruel, and through all the wintry journey they never once wandered from Janet's face.

At first the girl did not notice him, but after a while his concentrated gaze made her nerveless and restless.

She watched him in a kind of furtive terror, remembering that he took his ticket at the Heathcote station.

Who and what was he? Some one set to follow her, and watch her movements?

At the thought the poor girl's heart grew weak with fear.

The day wore by, and after a time they stopped to change at a small wayside station. Janet gathered up her satchel and hurried out. On the platform she glanced over her shoulder, and found that her dark-browed fellow-traveller was close at her heels.

She could have shrieked outright in her terror, but she made her way to the waiting train, and secured a seat, and, looking up, found her pursuer in the seat directly opposite, his cold, cruel gaze still fixed upon her.

That she was followed, and watched she had not now the least doubt, and probably for some purpose that might be of deadly peril to her friends. It would never do for her to follow out her intentions and go down to Cornwall. What if Margaret Seaton should be there? What if this were some minion of Colonel Hornshawe's sent down to capture her? Janet knew what a reward had been offered for Aunt Margaret's arrest, and, thinking it all over, she came to a decision on the spot.

At a little hamlet some ten or twelve miles ahead an old friend of her mother resided, and Janet made up her mind to stop at this place and remain all night with her friend, instead of proceeding to Cornwall.

The afternoon was almost spent, and the wintry twilight had fallen chill and gray, when the train steamed into the little village. Janet hurried out, feeling rather than seeing that she was closely followed by the man in the shaggy overcoat; but she was a brave girl, and she tripped along with steady steps.

A number of passengers crowded the steps of the hotel; the up-train from the coast was delayed on account of some slight accident, and they were impatiently awaiting its departure. Janet plunged into the midst of them, hoping to lose sight of her pursuer, and to make her way, unobserved, to the house of her friend.

"Can you tell me anything about the train, sir?" asked a woman just beside her, addressing an official who was passing; do you think we'll get off to-night?"

Something in the voice arrested Janet's attention. She glanced up at the gaunt figure, the worn and anxious face. One moment of thrilling uncertainty, then, utterly thrown off her guard by the surprise, she rushed after the woman, crying:

"Oh, Aunt Margaret; is it you? Aunt Margaret!"

Margaret Seaton turned and looked down at the eager, girlish face. A smile of recognition broke over her stern features.

"Why, Janet, little one," she began; but the greeting was cut short by a rude grip upon her arm and a hoarse voice in her ear:

"Margaret Seaton, I arrest you in the name of the law!"

Janet turned and saw it all at a glance. The man in the shaggy overcoat had poor Margaret in charge, and no alternative remained to her but to follow him.

Margaret Seaton had been safely lodged in the Yorkshire prison on a charge of larceny of very valuable property, preferred against her by Colonel Hornshawe and his wife, late Lady Heathcote. Little did Hendrick Seaton dream, as he sat brooding in his dark cell, that only a few feet from him, separated by one wall, lay the sister for whom he had risked and sacrificed so much. Poor Margaret, this last blow was heavier and more cruel than all the rest she had endured! It fell upon her so sharply and suddenly.

For hours after her imprisonment she lay in a death-like stupor, and when at last she awoke to consciousness her very reason seemed dulled by despair.

"There's no hope now," she muttered, her vacant eyes bent upon the mouldy flagstones; "no hope; I shall never get free of their clutches again. Heaven has forsaken me, and all I can do is to die!"

But death never comes at our calling.

Poor, sorely tried Margaret lived on from day to day, watching the brightening dawns and fading twilights with an agony of despairing impatience that grew into a living torture.

Meanwhile preparations for the approaching trial went on. The case had created an unprecedented excitement all over the country. Its like for cold-blooded cruelty had not been heard of for years; and in addition the prisoner was a young man of such high standing and reputable connexions. No one could imagine what possible motive he could have had for

committing such a deed, and every one felt anxious to hear the final issue. Moreover, it had leaked out that there were great and startling secrets to be revealed in connection with the trial. Consequently the excitement was intense.

Preparations for the trial were conducted on the grandest scale. The very ablest barristers had been employed both for the prosecution and the defence, and expectation was on tiptoe.

Yet there was very little diversity of opinion in regard to the issue, a settled belief in the young prisoner's guilt being almost unanimous. People pitied him, and referred to his former character with wonder at his sudden fall, but only a few had faith to trust in him in the face of the strong circumstantial evidence that went to prove his guilt.

Troherne Vant was dead and in his grave, and St. Denys Delmar, though he continued to linger from day to day, might as well have been dead also. He was utterly insensible, and there remained not the faintest hope or possibility of his reason ever being restored.

One of the faithful few who trusted in young Brignoli's innocence, despite the strong evidence against him, was Cowly, the detective; and another was Lady Heathcote Hornshawe, the unfortunate young man's mother.

On the very day after his imprisonment she drove down to see him in his cell, to let him know, as she expressed it, how firmly she believed in his innocence. But the young man received her very ungratefully, and utterly refused to accept either her aid or sympathy; yet the lady seemed in no wise discouraged. She made it a point to express her firm belief in his innocence, and offered a handsome reward for the arrest of the true murderer.

Every day, as surely as the sun rose, the Heathcote carriage might be seen on its way to the prison, and when her ladyship failed to go her servants went, carrying all manner of tempting delicacies, not one of which, however, the young man ever tasted. An ungrateful dog the warder called him; and when the story got out it went a great way towards strengthening the indignant feelings of the community.

In the meantime Colonel Ludovic Hornshawe was not idle. He was in London one day conferring with the counsel he had engaged, and riding over Yorkshire the next striving to impress upon the minds of the people the great responsibility that rested upon them. The colonel had a theory of his own in regard to this double murder. He held that Hendrick Seaton was the real perpetrator of the crime, and that his stepson, Carlos Brignoli, was wholly innocent. It was such an obvious fact, he said, for, while young Brignoli had no possible motive for doing such a deed, this man Seaton had an all-powerful one. For had he not, through his sister, got possession of the famous opal ring and all the hidden Heathcote wealth? And, fearing detection and punishment at the hands of St. Denys Delmar and the Heathcote solicitor, he had made an attempt to insure his own safety through their murder.

And Margaret Seaton, whose mysterious disappearance had excited so much wonder, had suddenly reappeared; but the colonel, by prompt and vigorous measures, had caused her arrest before she had time to carry into action any of her nefarious designs. The colonel urged the good people of Yorkshire to take the matter in hand and see that justice was done and these persons punished according to their misdeeds.

So the days wore away, the old year went out, and the new year came in.

Janet was in utter despair. She had made her journey down to Cornwall after having seen her aunt committed to prison, but she only increased her sadness of heart thereby. She found her mother bowed down beneath her sorrows, and poor Lady Grace lying in her little chamber suffering from a severe attack of brain fever, utterly unconscious. What should she do? She was needed at home, and she could not abandon her unfortunate friends in Yorkshire to the terrible fate that seemed to await them.

The best thing she could do was to divide her time between them, going and coming alternately, and racking her brain to devise some means for their help. But the clouds grew blacker with every day that went by, and at last the poor child lost all hope.

"Oh, Mrs. Telfer," she sobbed, sitting over the embers one wintry night when the trial was scarce a week off, "what shall I do? I have tried and thought, and the more I do the worse it seems, and my head has got to ache so of late I believe I'm going mad."

The landlady drew the girl's throbbing head to her ample bosom. She had made her promise good, and stood true to her despite everything.

She advocated the innocence of the Seaton in the clearest and strongest terms; not because of any particular insight into the case, but she was a true friend

to Janet and a bitter foe to Colonel Hornshawe, and she followed the lead of her sympathies.

"Dinna take it so to heart, my lass," she said, seasoning her words with tender caresses; "while there's life there's hope, you know, and the trial's not over yet. Telfer's laid out handsome, too—he didn't hold back for money. He's got two of the best lawyers in London to stand up for them, only never a soul must know it—and things mayn't turn out as you fear."

But Janet shook her head sadly. "If I could only see them just for one moment," she said, "if I could find out what they would like me to do—but I've tried day after day, and there's no hope. I know how good you've been, but I'm afraid you will never save them."

But Mrs. Telfer was hope itself.

"Don't you know, lass," she replied, "that a thing you don't fear scarcely ever harms you? You mustn't give up in this way. If you only had some friend—and now I've got the very thing. Sir Harry Heatherstone's down from Parliament now—down at Heatherstone Park. Telfer saw him yesterday. He's your man—and a wise, good man too, so folks say. Now my advice is, go right down and see him and tell him your story, and there's no knowing what he may do."

"I'll go," said Janet, decisively, and she retired to her pillow with a lighter and more hopeful heart.

#### CHAPTER XLIV.

JANET'S funds were running low, so she accomplished the distance to Heatherstone Park partly by coach and partly on foot. It was growing late in the afternoon when she reached the place, a fine old estate in one of the most attractive portions of Yorkshire.

Sir Harry was entertaining a large party of friends that day, and they were out shooting in the grounds, and Janet was shown into the housekeeper's room to await their return.

Hour after hour the poor child sat, till her limbs ached and her brain grew dizzy, watching the stately housekeeper, who was engaged in mending some costly old lace, or counting the figures in the carpet beneath her feet to while away the tedious time.

Hour after hour, and at last as the wintry dusk was closing in she heard the tramping hoofs and baying hounds that announced the party's return. The housekeeper went out to deliver her message.

"Please, madam, beg him to allow me to see him at once," entreated poor Janet, glancing apprehensively towards the dusky windows.

The housekeeper, who knew her master's habits, smiled grimly as she closed the door.

In a very few moments she returned. It was just as she supposed it would be—Sir Harry was going to dress for dinner, and refused to see her—she must come again.

Janet struggled to keep back her tears as she descended the broad staircase and passed out into the fine old park. She was weary and heart-sick, and almost ill, and, bitterly disappointed as she was, it seemed that she could never summon strength and fortitude to return home.

She paused for a moment on the edge of the park that overlooked the highway, and turned her pale, sad face towards the blazing winter sunset. The sun was quite out of sight, and already beneath the trees, and under the hedges the shades of twilight were settling. The girl shuddered at the thought of the long journey that lay before her. If she had money enough she would wait for the coach, that must soon pass, and not attempt to walk.

She took out her little purse, and, sitting down on the root of a tree, she counted over its contents. There was barely enough, and she determined to wait. So she sat watching the fading sunset, and counting the lights that began to flash out star-like from the lofty windows of Heatherstone Park, thinking all the while of her disappointment.

"Oh," she sobbed at last, unable to control her emotion, "if I only could have seen him! It was too bad to make this long journey for nothing."

"That it was, my little beauty," spoke a pleasant voice at her elbow; "and who is it, pray, that you wish so much to see?"

Janet started to her feet with a suppressed cry, and found herself facing a young man, very elegantly dressed, and quite handsome. But his face was flushed, and his eyes, as they smiled down upon her, had a look that made her thrill with terror.

"I wished to see Sir Harry," she said, quietly, "but he was engaged. Good-evening, sir."

She was hurrying in the direction of the highway, but his grasp upon her arm detained her.

"Stay, my dear," he continued; "no need for such haste. So you want to see Sir Harry, do you? I can get him to see you. What d'ye say?"

Janet was trembling in every limb, for the darkness would soon be on her, and the look in the man's eyes filled her with a feeling of disgust; still, above

every other consideration, was her solicitude for her friends.

"If you can—if you would, sir," she faltered, "I should be much indebted to you."

"Should you? Well, I like that. You're a pretty creature to hold in one's debt. By Jove, I've not seen such a figure for a twelvemonth!"

He tightened his grasp on her arm, and attempted to lead her into the park. But Janet tore herself free with a sudden flash in her brown eyes.

"How dare you, sir?" she panted. "Stand aside this instant and let me pass."

"I dare everything, my sweet, when a pretty woman's in question," he retorted, retaining his hold on her arm. "Come, we'll go and see Sir Harry."

"Let me go this moment," commanded Janet, her cheeks ablaze, her splendid eyes on fire.

But the man gloated on her lovely face with undisguised admiration, bending so close to her that his hot breath, fuming with wine, scorched her cheek.

"You shall give me a kiss," he said, insolently, "and then we'll find Heatherstone. Come!"

He drew her close, but Janet, freeing her hands by a powerful effort, struck him a sharp blow in the face. He uttered a fierce imprecation.

"By Heaven!" he cried, clutching her again, "you need look for no mercy now! D'ye think I'm going to be foiled in this way?"

Janet's very life seemed to die out of her as she felt his fierce grasp again. She glanced at the opal sky with a mute prayer for help and deliverance. It was heard, for sharp upon the evening air came the sound of wheels. She drew in her breath for an instant, then cried for help with all her might.

A moment later a carriage turned into the park, and stopped.

"What is it?" called a voice that thrilled the girl's heart with a strange emotion. "'Twas a woman's voice—look to it, Selwyn."

The valet jumped out and approached the spot where Janet stood.

"Keep off!" cried the disappointed Lothario, "don't come interfering here, or I'll put a bullet in your skull."

Before the valet could reply he was followed by his master.

"What's this?" he cried; "ah! Romington, 'tis you; I might have inferred as much—come, come, sir, lower your revolver, and unhand this lady, or I'll send Selwyn to summon Sir Harry on the instant."

But the young man gave his weapon an ominous click, and held on with dogged determination to Janet's arm. She turned her white, beseeching face towards her deliverer. A sudden exclamation escaped him, and with one stroke of his right arm he sent Lord Romington tumbling on the grass, while with his left he drew the affrighted girl towards him.

"Why, child, why, my little one," he murmured, his lips quivering, and his voice unsteady, "have I found you at last? Don't you know me—me whose life you saved?"

Janet smiled, despite her terror, and her lovely eyes grew luminous.

"Yes, Lord Glandore," she said, softly: "I know you."

"You are so white and tremble so," he continued, drawing her hand through his arm. "That scoundrel—how shall I keep my hands off you? We'll set this down with the other unsettled scores that stand between us two," he said, addressing the young lord, who gathered himself up with suppressed passion, "and when the reckoning time comes, as it certainly will, I warn you that you need look for no mercy from me, you coward."

Lord Romington showed his teeth savagely, but walked off in silence, like a beaten cur.

"Now, my child," continued Lord Glandore, "tell me how you came into this trouble."

"I came to see Sir Harry. I wanted him to help my friends, who are in trouble," replied Janet, looking up with eyes that spoke more than any words could have done: "but he refused to see me, and I was waiting here for a conveyance when that—that—"

"Scoundrel waylaid and insulted you," put in his lordship. "Never mind, he shall pay for it. But the coach has passed; you must allow me to take you home in my carriage."

"No, sir, thank you, I can walk."

"How far?"

"Down by Heathcote Abbey, but I'll—"

"Hush, my little girl," he said, pleasantly, "I've delivered you from evil, and I shan't allow you to go into danger. Walk to Heathcote, indeed! You would not get there by daybreak. Come, not a word; you saved my life once, and I owe you a good turn. Lead the way, Selwyn, we're ready."

And sorely against her inclination Janet was forced to accept his kind offer.

On the homeward drive her shy embarrassment



wore off, and she was led on, by his kind and pleasant words, to tell him all her troubles. He listened to the recital with grave interest.

"And you are the niece of Margaret Seaton?" he said when she had finished; "and you tell me she has suddenly reappeared?"

"I tell you the truth, sir, that she managed to escape from the terrible death intended for her," replied Janet, a little hotly; "and has been at once arrested and imprisoned by the same party who at first devised her ruin."

"Yes, my child, I know," returned his lordship, smiling at her spirit; "but, while I do not doubt a word of what you have told me, I am forced to tell you that all these things must be proved beyond a doubt before anything can be done. But I promise you to take the matter in hand, and to do all that can be done. I'll see Sir Harry Heatherstone myself, and use all my own influence to the utmost. I am very glad we have met; you are in sore need of help, my poor little girl."

Janet timidly put out her little hand, her beautiful eyes filling with tears.

"Oh, sir," she faltered, "how can I ever thank you enough? Half an hour ago my heart was ready to break, and I hadn't a friend in the whole world, and now—it seems—oh, I cannot say what I mean, you are so kind, sir!"

The young nobleman clasped the little brown hand and carried it tenderly to his lips.

"Ah, Janet," he replied, with deep emotion, "you forget the kindness is all on your side. My life belongs to you. There's nothing you could ask of me that I would refuse. My heart is ready to burst with the joy of this unlooked-for meeting. Oh, child, I have searched for you so long, and never for one moment could I banish from before me the sight of your pale, suffering face as I last beheld it on that terrible night! I have seemed to feel again the touch of your tender arms, as I felt them when you raised my head from death, at the risk of your own sweet life—I have heard your voice in my dreams, and your dear eyes have smiled upon me sleeping and waking. I have thought of you with every breath of my life, and prayed Heaven to give you back to me. Janet, Providence has answered my prayer. He sent me to-night to save you from insult; and, Janet, darling little one," he continued, utterly carried away by his impetuous passion, "I love you—I, who have met with nothing but treachery and disappointment all my life, love you, and cling to you as my one, last hope."

(To be continued.)

## A DARING GAME; OR, NEVA'S THREE LOVERS.

### CHAPTER XXXI.

NEVA WYNDE sat until a late hour upon the deck, watching the play of the moonlight on the waters, the leaping white crests of the waves, and the white furrow ploughed by the "Arrow" as she sped onward over the waters on her way to the northward.

The prophetic gloom settled down yet more darkly upon the young girl's soul. A bitter, homesick yearning filled her heart—a yearning for her father's love to shield her, her father's arm to lean upon, and her father's wisdom to counsel her.

Ah, could she but have known that far away upon other seas, but under starlit skies, and, speeding as fast as steam and wind could bear them, her father whom she so mourned as dead—her father was hurrying towards his home, with the same homesick longing in his breast, the same yearning to clasp her in his arms, together with the false wife he so idolized!

Could that false wife have but guessed the truth as she paced the yacht's deck arm-in-arm with her husband, conspiring against the peace and happiness of Neva, much of grief and terror that was lying in wait for the baronet's daughter, and much of guilt and wickedness that the two conspirators were planning, might have been avoided.

But neither knew or guessed the truth, and, long before Sir Harold could arrive in England Neva's fate was likely to be decided by herself or her enemies.

At a late hour the young heiress went to her room, Mrs. Craven Black bidding her a careless good-night as she passed.

Neva crept into her narrow berth, leaving her lantern on the wall burning. She could not sleep. A feverish unrest was upon her.

The first shadow of distrust of Octavia Black had flung its gloom across her pathway. Until this night she had been full of innocent, childlike faith in the woman her father had deemed as pure as an angel.

"I cannot believe Mrs. Black when she says that papa was determined to marry me to a man of whom

my father knew nothing, save that he had committed a noble deed upon impulse. When I refused to believe the story there was a look on Mrs. Black's face I have never before seen there—a look as of convicted treachery and falsehood. I distrust her—I almost fear her! I am sorry I came with her. If it is true that she is false and treacherous I am reconciled at last to papa's horrible death. He could never have borne the knowledge of her real character!"

She sighed, and turned restlessly on her pillow. "I believe Craven Black to be a villain," her thoughts ran presently. "He made love to me when he was already engaged to marry my father's widow. I am sure he hates me now. Perhaps he has perverted her mind against me? Perhaps she never liked me? I was never allowed to come back to my own home after she entered it, not even when dear papa died, and my heart seemed breaking, until Madame Dalant wrote that my school-days should terminate, and that I ought to be allowed to enter society. Mrs. Black has a caressing manner towards me, and flatters me, but I am sure she does not love me. Perhaps the two are my enemies? If so, how completely I am in their power, having even left my faithful maid behind me, at Mrs. Black's request. I fear I have been blind—blind!"

Poor Neva was now thoroughly alarmed. She remembered a score of incidents scarcely noticed at the time that went far to confirm the truth of her sudden suspicion that Mr. and Mrs. Craven Black were her enemies, and that they were conspiring against her. She struggled with her conviction, calling herself foolish, romantic and ungrateful, but the conviction remained.

The fact that the yacht had been engaged for the voyage to Yorkshire, when she had expected to go by train, and that she had not been told of the proposed route until her arrival in London, recurred to her unpleasantly and as something of sinister moment.

The fact also that Mrs. Craven Black had a keen personal interest in Neva's marriage to Rufus Black now for the first time obtruded itself upon the young girl.

"Rufus is Craven Black's son," she said to herself, "and, if I were married to Rufus, Craven Black would probably assume control of all my property. I acquit Rufus of any share in the conspiracy, but he is so weak of will that he would not dare to resist his father, who could appropriate half my income to his own use. Can this be Craven Black's design? Can Craven Black have forged that last letter purporting to come from papa? And does Octavia know his designs, and willingly aid him to carry them out? I must study them closely, without seeming to do so. I must be on my guard."

With thoughts like these Neva tossed upon her pillow for hours, until long after Craven Black and his bride had retired to their apartments, and silence had fallen upon the cabin, and the creaking of a block, or the rattling of oarage, or a voice or footstep on the little deck, sounded through the night with startling loudness, and as something new and strange.

At last she fell asleep, but her slumber was not refreshing, and she was looking very pale and worn when, after a careful toilet in the morning, she came out into the cabin.

The breakfast was spread upon the table, and Mr. and Mrs. Craven Black were seated upon a divan, conversing in whispers. They started guiltily at Neva's appearance, and Mrs. Black cried out, gaily:

"Good-morning, my dear. You are a laggard this morning. It is ten o'clock, and I have already taken a constitutional on deck. It's a fine, bracing air."

"I hope I have not kept you waiting," said Neva, courteously.

"Did you think us barbarous enough to eat our breakfast before your coming?" cried Craven Black, with exaggerated courtesy. "Sorry not to see you looking better. Did you pass a pleasant night?"

"I did not sleep very well," answered Neva, quietly.

She took her place at the table, and Craven Black waited upon her and his wife with careful attention. The breakfast consisted of stewed chicken, coffee, bread, fancy biscuits, and delicate fruits, including oranges, grapes, and peaches, and Neva brought to the meal an appetite sharpened by the sea air.

"I suppose we shall sleep at Wynde Heights to-night?" said Neva, forcing a cheerfulness she could not feel. "We must reach Yorkshire at our present rate of sailing long before evening. Do you purpose landing at Scarborough, or Whitby, or Stockton, Mr. Black?" she asked. "All three are railway stations, and we can go on to the heights without delay."

The husband and wife exchanged significant glances.

"Neva, dear," said Mrs. Black, caressingly, "would you care if we do not go to Wynde Heights? You know the place so little, and have no acquaint-

ances in the neighbourhood; and I have none, and I dread a visit to the Yorkshire dower house as something dull and stupid beyond comparison."

Neva looked at the speaker with startled eyes. "Are we not on our way to Wynde Heights, Mrs. Black?" she demanded, in surprise.

"Yes, dear, if you insist upon adhering to the strict letter of our original plan," answered Mrs. Black. "But I am sure you will not be so hard-hearted and cruel. I no longer want to go to Wynde Heights, and Craven thinks a stay there would be a bore; but of course, if you insist upon it, we will sacrifice our own pleasure to yours."

Neva struggled with her bewilderment.

"I thought we were on our way to Wynde Heights," she said; "but do not suppose I desire to go thither if you prefer to go elsewhere. It is your wish and pleasure, Mrs. Black, that must be consulted. Would you prefer a watering-place, or a visit to the German coast?"

"Neither," said Mrs. Black. "I am so relieved, dear Neva, for I feared you would oppose my wishes, and I think if a woman ought ever to have her own way it should be on her bridal tour. Craven has been telling me of the only piece of property he owns in the world, a worthless old Highland estate, valueless except for the shooting, with a dear old tumble-down house which no one will rent, and I fairly long to see it. It's quite natural, I think, for a bride to desire to visit her husband's property, and this came to Craven through his Scottish ancestors, the Macdonalds, and it has a host of curious legends and ghost stories, and such a charming, romantic name—Wilderness—that I am impatient to go to it; and Craven says, if you do not object, we will go on to Wilderness."

"Where is this place?" asked Neva.

"In Ross-shire. There are post-offices convenient, so that you can write back daily, if you like."

"But our arrival will be unexpected," objected Neva. "The servants at Wynde Heights are prepared for our coming, but no one will look for us at Wilderness."

"There is an old couple residing there," said Craven Black, "and everything will be done to make our stay pleasant at my old 'Castle Backrent.' I confess I should like to take my bride to the old place—it is years since I was there—and a week could be very pleasantly passed in mountain excursions, rows on the loch, and rides to the village. Can I say nothing to melt the stern resolution I see expressed in your face, Miss Neva?"

"September seems late for the Highlands," said Neva.

"But this is exceptionally lovely weather," urged Mrs. Black. "We only want to stay there a week. I see you mean to destroy all our pleasure, Neva, and condemn us to follow your lead."

"You are mistaken," said Neva, gravely. "I have no desire to urge my own wishes in the matter. This project of visiting the Highlands takes me by surprise, but I have nothing to urge against it. I wish, however," she added, colouring, "that you would land me at some convenient point on the coast, and permit me to return to Hawkhurst—"

"What! Alone and unattended?" cried Mrs. Black. "You wish to desert us, when I count upon your companionship and society? If you insist upon returning to Hawkhurst, Neva, of course you can go, and we will go with you. But this selfish tyranny—forgive me—is not like your generous self. I could not have believed you so ungracious. My pleasure is quite spoiled. Craven, dear, let us turn back to London."

Mr. Black arose to go on deck.

Neva detained him by a gesture, her proud face flushing.

"You need not turn back upon my account," she said, half haughtily. "I will accompany Mrs. Black to the Wilderness. I have no wish to appear ungracious, but you will remember that my friends do not know where I am, and may be anxious about me."

"Oh, Neva!" cried Mrs. Black, reproachfully. "Are we not your best friends? But I am too happy in your concession to find fault with your phraseology. Craven, we will go to your dear old Wilderness, and, if I like it, I'll fit it up for a shooting-box, and next year we will come up here the gayest party that ever visited the 'land o' oakes.'"

Neva did not linger in the cabin, but went out on deck, and walked to and fro for exercise, while her eyes scanned the waters and the horizon.

The yacht was far out upon the wide North Sea, or German Ocean, a mere speck in the wild waste of waters.

There were sails gleaming in the distance in the clear September sunshine, but no shores were visible. The wind was blowing fair and free, the sky was clear, the air was crisp and chilly, but nevertheless agreeable.

Neva walked alone until she grew tired, then sat down in her folding deck chair and thought until her brain was wearied.

Mr. and Mrs. Black joined her, and talked and chatted for some hours. Luncheon was served on the deck, and the afternoon wore on as the morning had done.

Night again settled down upon the sea, so bright with moonlight and starlight that it was not less lovely than the day had been.

Neva went to bed early, and slept profoundly, not even being visited by dreams.

The next day passed as the other had done, but the coast was not yet seen. The wind proved variable upon this day, but Craven Black consulted his charts frequently, and talked with the sailors, and Mrs. Black yawned, and declared that a sea voyage was charming but intolerably dull.

A third night dragged by, and Neva began to be anxious to get into port. She knew that Lord Town must be looking for a letter from her, and she desired to inform him of Mrs. Black's change of plan of travel and of her own whereabouts.

Upon the fourth day after leaving London the graceful little yacht stood in for the land.

Mrs. Black and Neva, as usual, spent the day on deck.

About noon the "Arrow" sped into Moray Frith, in the wake of a steamer bound for Inverness and the Caledonian canal, and followed by one or two sailing vessels which were allowed to pass the swifter yacht.

"Do we go into Inverness?" asked Neva as she looked at the chart, which Craven Black was exhibiting to her and his wife.

"No," answered Black. "Look at the chart, Miss Wynde. Do you see those narrow straits that connect Moray Frith with Cromarty Frith? We thread those straits, and a not very pleasant excursion it is either. Once safe in Cromarty Frith, we have plain sailing. I expect to sleep at Wilderness to-night."

The yacht in good time threaded the straits, and came out into the calmer waters of the loch-like Cromarty Frith, sailing up a portion of its distance, then, obeying the skilful hand at the helm, she shot into a deep stream or river, and went on into the very shadow and heart of the wild mountain region.

It seemed to Neva, as she looked around her in wonder, awe, and delight, that the chaos of the primeval creation yet reigned here. She saw no villages, no hamlets, no houses, no signs of habitation—nothing but grim mountain peaks and ranges, frowning cliffs, and inaccessible rocks. The vegetation was sparse and stunted, the few trees wildly clinging to niches in the bare rocks being dwarfed and sickly. Upon higher peaks in the distance Neva saw glittering crowns of snow, but nearer all was deadness, desolation, chaos.

"It looks as if this part of the earth had been abandoned by Heaven and shunned by man," she thought. "The utter dreariness is oppressive and terrible."

The "Arrow" felt her way on up the river, the banks growing steeper and narrower, the rocks and cliffs more frowning and the waters blacker. Mrs. Black began to look agitated, and to express a fear that the vessel would presently be caught in the narrowing throat of rocks, but her husband smiled reassuringly, and a little later the yacht shot into a small placid mountain loch, shut in by towering mountains, the waters looking black with the over-lasting shadows of the hills bending above them.

Both the ladies breathed more freely at this unlooked for termination to their voyage. Halfway up the loch the yacht came to anchor, and a boat was lowered to convey the passengers ashore.

"But, Craven," said Mrs. Black, wonderingly, "I see no house."

"Look half way up the mountain side," said her husband, pointing with his finger. "Do you see that broad ledge set thick with black-looking trees, firs, larches, and mountain pines? Back of the ledge, at a distance of half a mile, rises the high mountain peak. Well, on that wild-looking ledge, perched in mid-air, as one might say, an outlaw ancestor of mine who fought on the losing side in one of the Scottish wars, and was compelled to flee for his life, built an outlaw's den, in which he spent his last years and finally died. The house has since been improved and enlarged."

"But, my dear Craven," interrupted Octavia, "the Wilderness cannot be upon that ledge, up this steep pile of rocks. Why, the ledge is inaccessible, unless to yonder eagle. We cannot get up there without wings."

"You comprehend why I could never let or sell the place," said Craven Black. "But we can get up the cliff. There is a narrow footpath, not especially dangerous, but rather fatiguing. The men will bring up the luggage, and we will walk up. The boat is ready. Come."

He assisted his wife into the boat, then Neva. The maid came next. Dressing-bags followed. Mr. Black sprang in, and two of the sailors pulled lustily for the shore.

The passengers were landed at a projecting rock

at the water's edge, and Craven Black, ordering the seamen to remain where they were until he should send a servant to them, conducted his wife, Neva and the maid, by a narrow, steep, and tortuous path, up the precipitous face of the cliff.

The dreary night fell before they gained the ledge, but the soft moonlight flecked their path with gleams of brightness, and at last they stood upon the ledge, high up among the mountains, with the loch lying like a tarnished jewel far below at their feet.

"We are buried alive here!" gasped the little Frenchwoman, staring around her. "We are in a tomb!"

Neva's heart echoed the words.

The wide plateau, with its thickly growing trees on every side, looked very grim in the moonlight, obscured as that light was by the towering, frowning mountains. In the midst of the plateau stood an old stone house, long and low, and hideously ugly in its proportions, having a frowning and grim appearance well in keeping with its surroundings.

The front door of this house was open, and lights gleamed from the windows, and forms were seen hovering near the dwelling in watchful expectation.

"It looks as if we were expected!" said Neva, in surprise. "The house is not closed, as you said, Mr. Black."

Octavia Black laughed with a strange, mocking cadence that struck a chill to Neva's heart.

"Give Neva your arm, my dear," she said, gaily. "What an idea of yours that we are expected, Neva! Why, we only decided to come while we were on the sea. I am nearly famished, and hope some one will prepare supper for us and give us something better than oatmeal."

As the new comers drew near the house the forms Neva had seen disappeared. The travellers ascended the single step to the low, broad porch, and entered the wide hall of the dwelling.

This hall was lighted by a lantern suspended from the ceiling, and had a stone floor, a stone staircase, and doors upon each side opening into the living-rooms of the house.

The travellers halted in the midst of the hall, and at the same moment the parlour door opened and a woman came out with smiles of welcome—a woman clad in bright-coloured garments, but with ash-coloured hair and complexion.

This woman was Mrs. Artress!

Neva recognised her with a sudden horror. She knew in that instant that her visit to the Wilderness had been prearranged by her enemies—that her wildest suspicions of the falseness and perfidy of Octavia Black had fallen short of the truth—that she had been snared in a trap—that she was a prisoner!

#### CHAPTER XXXII.

THE composed and defiant announcement by Mrs. Wroat that she had adopted Lally Bird as her daughter and heiress was like a bombshell flung into the enemy's camp. Mrs. Blight stood as if turning to stone, in an utter panic; her eyes glaring upon Mrs. Wroat and upon Lally alternately, her chest heaving, her face livid. All her fine schemes of future grandeur became in an instant "airy visions, fading into nothingness." She beheld herself and her family upon the brink of insolvency, which this old lady's fortune might have averted. She was convulsed with rage and amazement and with bitter hatred of her young governess.

What she might have done or said cannot be known, for Peters, desiring to spare her aged mistress a scene and expected reproaches, pushed the bank-notes she held into Mrs. Blight's hand, and, taking her by the arm, gently forced her out into the hall and closed the door upon her.

This last indignity was too much for the disappointed woman. With a wild shriek she fled precipitately down the stairs, and burst into the drawing-room and into her husband's presence like an incarnate whirlwind; and here, flinging herself into a chair, she gave way to a burst of hysterics as violent as terrifying.

The first act of Mr. Blight was to deluge his wife with the contents of a carafe of water which happened to be at hand. Then, bending over her and chafing her hands, he adjured her to tell him what was the matter, and if the children were all killed.

"You—you beast!" gasped the wife, with the tones and breathing of a drowning woman. "You've ruined my new dress, and it cost fifteen shillings a yard, if it cost a penny! Goodness knows where I am to get another. I expect to find myself in the union by this time next year, on account of that treacherous rascal that I warmed in my bosom! Oh, my poor children—my poor, ruined lambs!"

"What do you mean, Laura?" demanded her husband, impatiently. "Don't be an idiot if you can help it for once. What has happened?"

"Everything has happened!" wailed Mrs. Blight. "We are miserable, good-for-nothing beggars. The old fright upstairs has gone and left all her money to that jade of a governess—"

"Speak sense, if you can. What do you mean, I ask again? How can Aunt Wroat have gone and left all her money to Miss Bird? Is your mind wandering?"

"No, I wish it was. I'd rather be a wild maniac of Bedlam than what I am at this moment," moaned the unhappy lawyer's wife. "My governess, Miss Bird, you know, is hob-nobbing with Aunt Wroat; and who do you think the artful minx has turned out to be? Why, she says she's the daughter of Clara Percy, who married a corn-chandler—the very girl that Aunt Wroat has been looking for for over a year. And Aunt Wroat has adopted her, and says the girl is to inherit every penny of her fifty thousand pounds, except money enough to buy you and me each a penny whistle, or some such thing. And the girl is to have all of Aunt Wroat's splendid diamonds. Oh, dear! Oh, dear! What is life but a trial? Why was I born?"

"But this is infamous!" gasped the lawyer. "It's preposterous. The girl's an impostor. Why didn't you tell Aunt Wroat so?"

"I did—I did. But she sneered at me—she did, indeed. And here are the five pounds I advanced the girl; Aunt Wroat paid them back to me. And here are twenty pounds for the expenses we've been put to on Aunt Wroat's account. They make me take the money. But what can pay us for our blighted hopes? The girl ought to be arrested. If I were only a judge I'd send her to Botany Bay!"

"Serves you right for taking the jade in! So she's the daughter of Clara Percy. I thought her name seemed familiar," said the lawyer. "Aunt Wroat was always uttering that name on her visit to us last year. What fatality!"

"Must we give up in this way?" sobbed Mrs. Blight. "Is there nothing we can do?"

The lawyer paced the floor excitedly, his features working. Suddenly he paused before his wife, and said, in a whisper:

"Are you sure the girl is honest?"

"As sure as that I am—the treacherous cat!"

"Are you sure, Laura, that she hasn't stolen something of yours—a jewel, a bit of lace, or a trinket?"

"Yes, I'm sure," answered the obtuse Mrs. Blight. "She's had no chance to take anything of mine since she came into this house. Ellen's been sewing in my bedroom every day from morning till night."

"Are you sure—"

"I'm not sure of anything, Charles, except that we are lost, ruined, and undone. Yes, I am sure that what you are thinking of can't be done. I won't be dragged into court; I won't swear to a falsehood, for I'd be sure to be caught. I won't be publicly disgraced in an attempt to ruin the girl. We shouldn't deceive Aunt Wroat, and she'd get a keener lawyer than you are to turn you and me inside out."

"You needn't tell all that to the whole house, servants included," exclaimed Mr. Blight. "Our game is up, unless this girl is got rid of. We can turn her out of the house to-night, and that we will do. But first of all we will go upstairs and argue the case with Aunt Wroat."

"I haven't told you all," said Mrs. Blight, still weeping. "Aunt Wroat is not deaf at all, and heard you call her an old cat and an old nuisance."

"It was you called her so."

"It was you! Of course, if we are ruined you'll lay all the blame on me. Men are all alike, from Adam down. It's always the woman did it. The idea of her pretending to be deaf and listening to what we said! It'll do no good to go upstairs to talk with Aunt Wroat, but I'll make a last effort for the sake of my dear children."

The well-mated pair went up to the door of Mrs. Wroat's chamber, and knocked loudly for admittance. Peters replied to them through the keyhole:

"My mistress desires to be excused. She can bear no more excitement to-night. Besides, she is occupied with her niece."

The lawyer tried the door fiercely; it was locked. Then he stooped, applying his mouth to the key-hole.

"Tell your mistress," he said, in a sort of roar, "that that girl is an impostor, and no more her niece than she's her grandfather. The girl is deceiving her—"

He paused discomfited as he heard the old lady hobble away into the inner room, followed by Lally.

"You'd better go downstairs," advised Peters, through the medium Mr. Blight had employed. "Maybe you don't know you're making yourself liable to a suit for slander."

"We had better go down," said the lawyer. "The servants are collecting on the basement stairs to learn the cause of the hubbub. We'll see Aunt Wroat in the morning, and convince her she's been taken in by a clever adventuress—but the girl goes to-night."

With this resolve the couple returned to the drawing-room, leaving the door ajar that they might hear



Lally's return to her room. They waited for hours, but they did not hear it.

The servants retired to bed, and the clocks through the house struck twelve, and still Lally did not emerge from Mrs. Wroat's room.

The Blights crept up again to their visitor's door, but silence reigned.

"The old thing has gone to sleep," murmured Mrs. Blight. "I can hear that odious Peters breathing. Perhaps the girl has slipped to her room so silently that we did not hear her."

They stole up to the third floor to see. They found Lally's room empty and dark.

"They've outwitted us," said Mr. Blight, indignantly. "The girl is going to sleep with the old woman to-night. By George, I wish the old creature would die in her sleep; I'd have the girl arrested for her murder. We may as well go to bed, Laura. We must be up early in the morning."

They retired to their room, but we may safely assert that they did not sleep. They lamented the failure of their plans, accused each other of ruining their mutual prospects and those of their children, and arose soon after daybreak, embittered, angry, and full of rage and spite.

About seven o'clock they heard Lally come forth from Mrs. Wroat's chamber, and go up to her room.

The young governess had slept with her aged kinswoman, and now, by Mrs. Wroat's command, was about to pack her few effects in her box ready for departure.

Mr. and Mrs. Blight followed Lally to her room and entered it without knocking.

The girl was busy folding her garments, and her round gipsy face was all aglow, her black eyes had in them a look of hopefulness of late a stranger to them, and she was altogether changed from the pitiously sorrowful young creature of the day before.

Even the love of her eccentric kinswoman had served to kindle the spark of new hopes and new interests in Lally's lonely life. She regarded her visitors with something of surprise, but received them courteously.

"Good-morning, madam; good-morning, sir," she said, bowing. "Will you be seated?"

"Viper! Ingrate!" cried Mrs. Blight, theatrically, but with genuine anger. "I warned you in my bosom as it were, I fed you at my table, I paid you at the rate of twenty pounds a year—and this is the way you reward me! Serpent! Base serpent!"

"I don't understand you, madam. What is it I have done?"

"Hear her!" cried Mrs. Blight, her hands uplifted, apostrophizing the ceiling. "She asks what she has done!" and the lady's tones grew hysterical. "She has taken the bread from my children's mouths! She has made me a beggar! She has traduced us, and now asks us what she has done!"

"Madam," said Lally, her black eyes flashing. "I have not traduced you."

"You have repeated to Mrs. Wroat my unguarded remarks about her, made to you in confidence."

"Again you are mistaken, madam," said Lally, sternly. "I have not repeated those remarks. Mrs. Wroat judged you by words she herself overheard. I have done nothing to injure you, nor is it my fault that your great-aunt has chosen to exact me at your expense. Believe me, Mrs. Blight, if my aunt had not found me she would not have left her money to you."

"Your aunt?" cried the lawyer. "It seems to me you are getting along fast, young woman. Your aunt, eh? It is my opinion that you are a clever adventuress, and I deem it my duty to protect my dear aunt from your evil machinations. Put your things into that trunk. Laura, ring the hall bell for Buttons."

Mrs. Blight complied. Buttons made his appearance.

"Take that trunk down to the street, and call a cab," commanded Mr. Blight.

The trunk being locked with a spring catch Buttons shouldered it and vanished down the stairs.

"Now, miss," said the lawyer, with vindictive triumph, "you must be off. You cannot be allowed to speak again to the infirm old lady you have persecuted. March down the stairs quietly, or I'll call a policeman and accuse you of stealing."

"Mr. Blight—"

"Not a word, miss. On with your bonnet and shawl and depart. One word to arouse Mrs. Wroat and I'll have you dragged off to jail."

The colour went in and out of the girl's cheeks, and she was frightened and confused. Her situation seemed to her indeed terrible. Peters had confided to her during the previous night, while Mrs. Wroat slept, that the old lady, in addition to her pulmonary disease, had an affection of the heart, and her physician had declared that she must not be unnecessarily excited, for excitement might prove dangerous

to her. The excitement of finding her great-niece for whom she had so long sought had been almost too much for her, and Lally feared to disturb her farther.

"You need not lay your hands upon me, Mr. Blight," said the young girl, drawing herself away from his touch. "I will go from your house, as you command—but don't touch me!"

She hastened down the stairs, followed by her late employers, and paused for a second in the lower hall with her gaze fixed upon Mrs. Wroat's door. But it did not open, and she went on and came out into the yard. The garden door was open, and a cab stood in front of it, Lally's box already mounted upon the roof.

"Where shall I tell the cabbie to go, miss?" asked the lawyer, ushering Lally into the street, and laying hold of the cab door. "Get in," he added, fiercely, in an undertone, "or I'll send for a policeman!"

Lally climbed into the cab, not answering.

"To the railway station," said the lawyer, closing the door softly.

The cab rolled down the street. The Blights, triumphant, re-entered their villa.

"I'll make it right with the old woman," muttered the lawyer, rubbing his hands. "I'll tell her the girl has run off, after acknowledging that she was an impostor, and that her real name is Jones. Come in, Laura. We're not quite ruined yet."

If he was not quite ruined he was certainly nearer ruin than he thought. As true as he believed himself, he had not quite understood the young lady with whom he had to deal. Lally had not gone far down the street when she lowered the front window of the cab and quietly touched the driver's arm.

"We'll go back to Sandy Lane," she said, in a tone of command. "I have no more to say."

"Forgot your purse, ah?" said the driver. "All right, miss."

He turned and drove back.

Lally commanded him to halt in the middle of the road, in full view of the front windows of the villa.

The parlour of Mrs. Wroat faced the street. The inside blinds were raised, and Lally gazed up at the windows expectantly.

"Could you throw a pebble to hit those upper windows, driver?" she asked of the puzzled cabman.

"Doubtful, miss. Might break the glass, and have a big bill to pay. Is there somebody upstairs there you want to call?"

Lally nodded.

The cabman glanced up and down the street; there was no policeman to be seen; and he then gave utterance to such a yell as brought to their window not only Mrs. Wroat and Peters but Mr. and Mrs. Blight at the drawing-room windows.

Mrs. Wroat at the upper window saw Lally, the cab, and the box upon it, and comprehended what had occurred.

Peters threw up the sash.

"Wait a minute, cabman," said the old lady, leaning from the window and speaking shrilly. "There are two more of us, and a parrot and a dog and plenty of luggage. I'll give you double fare—wait, wait!"

She disappeared just as the lawyer bounded out of the house to order the cabman away. That worthy, obeying Lally's command, stood his ground, and offered to fight the lawyer if he received "any more of his check."

Mr. Blight retreated, with his wife, and hurried up to Mrs. Wroat's chambers. He met her hobbling out of her room, leaning upon the arm of the faithful Peters, who was laden with the parrot's cage, the bandbox and umbrella, and was followed by the dog.

This latter immediately conceived a desire to nip the lawyer's legs, and Mr. Blight was obliged to keep up a very undignified dance to avoid him, while he addressed the old lady in terms of exaltation and entreaty, heaping vituperations upon Lally.

"Send my trunks down, and be lively," said Mrs. Wroat, paying no need to his words. "Don't act like a 'Dancing Jack,' or your friends will put you in Bedlam, Blight. Come, Peters, Mr. Blight has kindly ordered a cab for us, and we must be off. If we're lively we can catch the up express."

She brushed past the Blights, husband and wife, the latter weeping and pleading, and descended into the yard. The cabman was induced to go up after her baggage, the exhibition of a half-crown lending him wonderful strength and alacrity, and the cab was soon piled high with luggage. Mrs. Wroat, Lally and Peters took their places inside, the driver mounted, and just then the Blights, resolved upon a last despairing effort to gain the fleeting fifty thousand pounds, came out to the garden door.

Mrs. Wroat bowed to them mockingly, and said, as she waved her hand, with glowing exultation, her eyes snapping:

"Good-bye, Mr. and Mrs. Blight. My niece

and I will breakfast at the station, and dine at our house in town. My Blighted friends, if you are ever in need write to my heiress, and I dare say she will send you a half-crown. Driver, to the railway station."

The cab with its occupants rolled away in triumph.

(To be continued.)

## OUT OF THE DARK.

MAX RAYMOND was going to Cambridge on a little matter of business, and, somehow, had mistaken the time, and found on reaching the railway station that he had a full half-hour to wait.

While he was pacing backwards and forwards on the platform his keen eye caught sight of a girl's trim, neat figure, standing a little on one side and glancing around with a troubled, half-frightened expression upon her lovely face.

That face, with its ripe, strawberry-coloured mouth, its peach-like skin, and great, appealing brown eyes, interested and attracted him at once.

"Poor thing," he muttered; "I wonder what she can be waiting for."

But he resumed his stride up and down the platform, and presently took a letter from his pocket, and read over for the hundredth time at least a particular passage. That passage was contained in the following:

"I think you will like Rosedale very much, dear Max. It's a charming place, and my father's second wife can be an incomparable hostess when she is so disposed—and she will be towards you."

"Millionaires are welcome everywhere you know. But you must be pretty well acquainted with me where's weak points already, so no more of her."

"One word about my step-sister, Isabel. She is ten times more charming than when you met her at Scarborough last summer. She is delighted at the thought that you are to be our guest for a few weeks. But I don't want you to fall in love with her, old boy. Heaven forbid! I've had quite a different future mapped out for you, but fear my dreams must end in disappointment. A great sorrow has fallen upon us. I can't tell you what it is in this letter, but you shall know all about it when you come."

This was from the letter of one Ralph Ballantyne, an old college friend of Raymond's. They had been very dear to each other. Now an odd, half-troubled smile curled Max's handsome lips as he crumpled the sheet in one hand and thrust it back again into his pocket.

"Strange," he thought, "that Ralph's letter should affect me so singularly. I'm dwelling upon it continually. Strange, too, that the dear fellow has made no mention of his own sister, the little Beatrice whose praises he used to din continually into my ears. There must be a reason for it. Perhaps she is concerned in the 'great sorrow' of which he speaks. Bah! I shall know all about it in a few hours. Why can't I be content to dismiss the subject for that length of time?"

He shrugged his shoulders impatiently. His trunks were all packed and waiting for him at his hotel. He intended to return from Cambridge next morning, then go on to Rosedale. But it seemed hard, somehow, to wait even a few hours before going to the Ballantynes'. Yet he could assign no reason whatever for the impatience he felt.

Turning suddenly, his gaze once again fell full upon that motionless figure standing close up against the wall. She was still alone, and Max was sure he saw tears in the appealing brown eyes this time.

She seemed so solitary and disconsolate that he resolved to accost her.

Crossing to her side, he lifted his hat courteously, and said:

"You seem to be quite alone, miss. Are you waiting for anybody?"

"No, no," she answered, in a hasty but very sweet tone of voice. "I am not waiting for anybody."

"Can I do anything to help you?"

At this question she looked up at him searchingly. Those were honest eyes that met her own. And the handsome face had something noble and true and sincere in its expression. It was a face to be trusted, and she knew it.

"Oh, sir," she said, drawing a deep, half-sobbing breath, "I am sure you can help me. London is all strange to me, and I feel so confused and at a loss. If you would only tell me what to do I should be very grateful indeed."

"You came in by the express?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you wish to find some respectable hotel where you can remain to-night?"

"No, no," she said, hastily. "I would much rather not remain here at all. I want to go to Bristol, and I don't know where to find the station, or anything about it."



[RASCAILLE'S THREAT.]

She looked ready to cry. Raynor could scarcely forbear smiling at her distress. But his heart was full of pity and sympathy none the less.

"Poor child," he said; "you should have taken a cab to Praed Street."

"Oh!"

He knew by that exclamation, and the expression on her face, how wholly unused she was to travelling. And he could guess how forlorn a sensitive woman must feel under such circumstances.

After a moment's reflection his resolution was taken. Rosedale was not far from Bristol. He would give up the trip to Cambridge, and so accompany this child on her journey, and see that she was safely cared for.

"Poor dove," he thought, "I can't leave her in her present forlorn condition."

He looked at her with a smile.

"I am also going to Bristol, miss; and, if you would like to have me for a travelling companion, and I can be of any possible service to you—"

"Oh, I am so glad!" she broke out, her whole face lighting up.

There was something so charmingly naïve and artless in her exclamation, and the joy she took no pains to conceal, that Max Raynor smiled again. He knew there was no acting—nothing put on about it. It came straight from her innocent, fluttering little heart.

He found a cab, and helped her into it, and in a very few minutes they were at the Great Western terminus.

Consulting a time-table when his protégée was comfortably established in the waiting-room, he found that they had three hours to wait before the next train left for Bristol.

"So much the better," he thought. "Now I can send for my trunks."

He did so, then went in to tell the young lady how long they were likely to be detained.

"If you could only contrive to sleep a little," he said, "as it will be a long journey, I'm sure you would be very much refreshed. I shall remain within call."

"Thank you," she returned, in a very low voice. She leaned back in the seat, with her head against the wall, and dropped her veil over her face.

Raynor could not tell whether she closed her eyes or not. But she remained very quiet, her feet resting on a morocco hand-bag that seemed to be her only luggage.

Somehow Raynor felt a strange thrill run all through him as he watched her.

"Who is she? What is the mystery that seems to enshroud her?" he pondered. "Strange that I should have taken such an interest in one of whom I know so little."

He did not speak to her again until it was time for them to take their places in the train. Then he found her a seat opposite his own.

After he had purchased the tickets and taken his seat she turned to him and said:

"I am sure you must think I am acting very strangely. But," she hesitated and blushed painfully, "I have been away from home—and—and nobody knows I'm coming back so soon. That is why I am all alone."

She said very little after that. While they stopped at one of the stations on the route Raynor brought some refreshment to his companion, and occupied himself in glancing over the evening paper.

Of a sudden his eyes fell upon the following advertisement:

"WANTED.—Information of a young lady who left her home in Clifton on the fifth of July. She is of the middle height, brown eyes, oval face; has a small mole under her left ear. Any person giving information of her whereabouts shall be handsomely rewarded.—Address M. B., Post Office, Clifton."

Raynor dropped the paper, and a low exclamation

fell from his lips. It was near Clifton that Rosedale was located, and "M. B." were the initials of Mrs. Ballantyne's name.

What did it all mean?

The young lady turned when he cried out, and regarded him in some surprise. The light fell full upon her face as she did so. "Middle height, brown eyes, oval face"—there they were, all repeated in the person before him.

He leaned forward a little. There, too, was the mole under her left ear—so small that he would never have noticed it had not his attention been particularly called to it.

He caught his breath sharply. She continued to look at him.

"What is the matter?" she asked, in a half-frightened tone of voice.

"Nothing," he replied.

He picked up the paper and fell back into his seat again. After a brief hesitation his resolution was taken. He tore out the advertisement and held it before her eyes.

"Read that," he said, briefly.

She read it, growing deathly white the while and looking ready to faint.

"I know what you think," she said, after a brief silence. "You think I am the person there described. And you are right."

He regarded her with deeper interest than ever. "And you are now going back to your friends?" he said, at last.

"Yes," she replied, stifling a sob. "I tried to live away from them, but found myself likely to starve. Yes, I'm going back. Nobody can claim the reward that is offered, after all," and she smiled half scornfully.

"Poor child."

"Do you pity me?" she asked, quickly.

"Yes, for I know it must have been some very good reason that compelled your flight."

"It was."

"Will you confide that reason to me?"

She hesitated for a minute, then looked up at him with charming frankness.

"My step-mother would have compelled me to marry a man I disliked. I thought I couldn't do it, so I ran away more than three weeks ago. I hid myself in a little village, and tried to find employment. But I didn't succeed, and here I am going back again."

She spoke very quietly, but there was an under-current of bitterness and desperation towards the last.

"You will marry the man you dislike, after all?" said Raynor.

"I suppose I must."

He looked at her keenly.

"I am going to Clifton too," he said.

"You?"

"Yes," he continued, his eyes never once stirring from her face. "I have friends near there—the Ballantynes. Ralph is a friend of mine. I'm on my way to visit him."

She gave a little gasp, and seemed to be violently agitated.

"Then you are Mr. Raynor," she said, speaking with difficulty.

"Yes; Max Raynor. But how did you know me?"

"I have heard Ralph speak of you over and over again. I knew you were expected about this time."

"Indeed!"

"Yes. I am Beatrice Ballantyne."

Raynor laughed.

"I had guessed as much already, my poor child," he said, in a tenderly pleasant tone of voice. "Ralph wrote to me of the 'great sorrow' that had fallen upon him."

"Poor Ralph," she murmured. "It was so very hard to hide myself away from him. I knew he would be terribly grieved over it."

"Why did you do it?"

She drew a deep breath.

"Ah," she said, artlessly, "the dear fellow never could have kept my secret. He wouldn't have suffered me to go away. But he was as powerless as myself to hinder anything from taking place that my step-mother had set her heart upon. Dear, dear Ralph! But for him, and the misery I knew he must be in, I would never have come back."

"You would have starved, eh?" laughed Raynor.

"I would have starved."

A short silence fell between them. The young man saw by the lines that were in that lovely face, and its haggard, worn look, that she had suffered much pain and anxiety.

Her resolution to return to Rosedale had cost her dear, evidently. He longed almost irresistibly to take her in his arms and comfort her.

"I know your step-mother well," he said, presently, "and Miss Isabel Lamont too. How does it happen that I never met you?"



"I have never been out much," she replied, evasively.

"Mrs. Ballantyne does not take you to the fashionable watering-places?"

"Never."

Her lip curled in a bitter smile. Raynor read in her expression what she was too proud to say—that Mrs. Ballantyne was too selfish and envious to put herself to such trouble and expense for a step-daughter who would only be in her way and in Isabel's.

"I am glad, after all, that you are to be at Rosedale during my visit," he said, gently.

"And I am glad to know you because you are Ralph's friend." She flashed a bright smile upon him as she spoke. "Ralph's friend—and mine," she added, quickly. "How strange that we should have met so opportunely. You have been very kind to me. I don't know what I should have done without you."

"You did look rather forlorn when I first saw you standing in the station by yourself," said Raynor, trying to cheer her; "otherwise I shouldn't have found courage to accost you."

She smiled again, but this time there were tears in her eyes. He knew from these how very glad and grateful she felt.

They had much to say to each other during the remainder of the journey. Ralph was such a connecting link between them that they already felt like old friends.

"That brother of yours will give me a double welcome since I can restore to him his sister," he said.

She blushed, and gave him a grateful look.

"I am sure you must think very much of Ralph," she said, sweetly.

"I do."

"Of his charming sister also," he might have added with perfect truth.

In due course the carriage which Raynor had engaged at the station to convey them to their destination rolled up a long avenue bordered with trees, and finally drew up before a great red brick house. This was Rosedale.

Beatrice was very pale, and seemed all in a flutter when the carriage stopped.

"I am such a coward," she faltered. "Please go in without me. I shall be more composed directly."

Raynor had the tact and good sense to leave her without speaking. He ascended the steps, and was shown into the parlour by a servant. It had but one occupant at the moment—a young man, very handsome, though rather effeminate looking, with a weak, frowsy mouth and a listless air.

This was Ralph Ballantyne.

At sight of Raynor he ran up and warmly grasped both his hands.

"Heaven bless you, old boy!" he cried. "I'm delighted to see you!"

"The pleasure is mutual," said Raynor, heartily.

Then the two drew back, and looked curiously at each other.

"You have not changed at all since I saw you last, dear Max," said Ralph.

"You have. You look sad, and very much down in the mouth."

"No wonder," sighed Ralph. "It's all because of Beatrice. Madam, my step-mother, has driven her off by her cruelty. I'm afraid the poor girl has done something desperate."

"Oh, no."

"I believe it; and I am compelled to sit here helpless—doing nothing! Ah, if I only had the dear girl back again she should never again be so persecuted."

"How persecuted?"

"Madam wanted to marry her to old Rascaille, and she hates him. But, hush! I will tell you more anon."

Ralph's quick ear caught the rustle of silken drapery in the passage. He held up his finger warningly. The next instant the door opened, and two ladies and a gentleman entered the apartment.

The man was a large, burly fellow, at least fifty years of age, with twinkling, bead-like black eyes, and a most unprepossessing physiognomy generally. The elder lady was portly and handsome. The younger one was only a tall, slight girl with a dark, colourless face, blue-black hair, and almond-shaped eyes of soft and dusky gloom.

These were Mrs. Ballantyne and her daughter by a former marriage—Isabel Lamont.

Of course they recognized Raynor at once, and were all smiles and sweetness.

"It is so delightful to renew old associations, and to meet with old friends," murmured Mrs. Ballantyne, folding her little white hands. "We were quite intimate at Scarborough last summer, I believe."

"Quite intimate, madam."

"I have never forgotten you. No more has Isabel. Your name is often mentioned between us. But I had forgotten—pray pardon me—Mr. Raynor, Mr. Rascaille."

Raynor now turned and looked hard at the man for the first time. He wore bushy whiskers, and his hair was rather long. But, in spite of this attempt at disguise, the young man recognized him as one he had known long before, and under a different name—and of whom he had never known any good.

The recognition was mutual. Mr. Rascaille's eyes dropped, and he bit his thin lip in angry embarrassment.

"Wish I could say I was happy to meet you, Mr. Rascal," muttered Raynor, with curling lip.

Mrs. Ballantyne looked round quickly and sharply. "You have mistaken the name," she said. "It is Mr. Rascaille," accentuating the last syllable very strongly.

"A most unfortunate patronymic," interpolated he who laid claim to it.

"And very suggestive," Raynor swung on his heel as he spoke. "Madam," he added, abruptly, "I have brought a friend with me to Rosedale. May I take the liberty to present that friend without farther ceremony?"

It was Isabel who answered:

"A friend of Mr. Raynor's can be no less than welcome. Is it not so, mamma?"

"Certainly, my dear. Where is he? In the carriage? Pray bring him in at once."

Raynor smiled at the pronoun used, but did not see fit to correct her. He went straight out to the carriage where poor, trembling Beatrice was waiting.

"Courage, my child," he whispered. "I am going to take you in. It will all be over in a few minutes. Don't tremble."

He dropped the veil over her face, led her up the steps and into the parlour, then raised it again.

"Miss Beatrice Ballantyne," he said, in a low, distinct voice.

"Ah!" cried out madam and Isabel in a breath. But both turned pale and seemed astonished and disconcerted.

As for Mr. Rascaille, a gleam of triumph lighted up his beady eyes.

Ralph uttered a shout of joy, and clasped the poor, fluttering creature to his heart in a long, loving embrace.

"Ah, my sister!" he exclaimed. "You are back again—you are found at last. Heaven be praised!"

Mrs. Ballantyne and her daughter looked at each other uneasily.

"How touching," murmured the former, putting a point-lace handkerchief to her eyes. "I am almost overpowered. It reminds me of the return of the prodigal son."

"I don't see any similarity in the two cases," said Ralph, with an unusual show of spirit, glancing over his sister's shoulder.

Mrs. Ballantyne frowned.

"I do, however."

Then she went forward and pressed a Judas kiss upon Beatrice's lips.

"You foolish child," she added, "I hope you have heartily repented of your folly, and come back with the intention of turning over a new leaf."

Beatrice did not answer.

After a momentary hesitation, Isabel, in her turn, approached.

"How could you frighten us so?" she said, reproachfully. "We were driven half out of our wits when we found you had gone. You didn't leave behind a single clue by which you might be followed."

"I didn't wish anybody to follow me," faltered Beatrice.

"I should say not," muttered Rascaille, from his corner.

"We searched everywhere, and at last were compelled to advertise," Isabel went on. "We imagined all sorts of horrors to have befallen you. Do tell us how you happened to meet with Mr. Raynor. It seems so very strange."

"I can readily explain it all," said Max.

And he did.

Mrs. Ballantyne and Isabel listened attentively, always putting in the Oh's! and Ah's! at the proper places.

"How very fortunate," murmured madam, at the end, "that you met with a gentleman of Mr. Raynor's integrity. Ah, I shudder to think what would have become of you otherwise. My dear child, never attempt such another escapade, my dear child. It might not end as this one has done."

Beatrice shuddered, and hid her face on Ralph's shoulder.

"We were quite in despair about you," madam persisted. "At last your good friend, Mr. Rascaille, proposed that a reward should be offered. I'm glad, though, that you determined of your own accord to return to Rosedale."

No more was said, for Ralph, with a crimsoning face, drew Beatrice from the room at this juncture.

Mrs. Ballantyne and Mr. Rascaille soon followed them, leaving Raynor to play the agreeable to Isabel—a task for which he hardly felt in the mood after what had occurred.

Later in the day he found opportunity for a long, confidential chat with Ralph.

"My dear fellow," he said, abruptly, "I want you to tell me all about this Mr. Rascaille."

"There isn't much to tell. He made his appearance at Rosedale some six months ago, and has remained here ever since."

"Who introduced him to the family?"

"Nobody."

"What?"

"Nobody," repeated Ralph. "He must have known my step-mother years ago, I think. At any rate, he quartered himself upon us like an old friend, and no opposition was made."

Raynor started and looked puzzled.

"That is strange," he said.

"I think so. But madam is a real despot in her own house, and it was of no use remonstrating with her."

"It's a pity your father isn't living!"

"Eh?" Ralph looked up quickly and sharply. "I don't understand you," he faltered.

"No matter. Let me go on with my questioning. Did this Rascaille pay his addresses to Beatrice from the very first?"

"No. I think all that sort of thing was arranged between him and madam after he had been here some weeks."

"Why should Mrs. Ballantyne wish to marry Beatrice to that sort of man?"

Ralph slowly shook his head.

"I'm as sorely puzzled over the matter as you can be. Rascaille is old and ugly, and I don't imagine he can be very rich."

"Yes, yes. The true reason is at the bottom of everything that comes to the surface."

Ralph gave a slight start.

"You have put my own thought into words," he said.

"Then you are not favourably disposed towards the alliance?"

"I?" His cheek crimsoned hotly. "I would rather see Beatrice a corpse than bound to such a man!"

"Then she must never be bound to him."

The poor fellow shrugged his shoulders.

"Madam has a habit of accomplishing whatever she undertakes," he said, drily. "I'm afraid she will not brook failure in this instance."

"She must," cried Raynor. "I know something of this man that makes him a wholly unsuitable match for your sister."

"What is it?"

"I will tell madam—not you."

"Very good," laughed Ralph. "You can't do better. You may have some influence with her whereas I can lay claim to none."

Raynor was as good as his word. And Mrs. Ballantyne herself opened the way for him to speak.

It was that same evening. They were all in the parlour, with the exception of Beatrice, who did not make her appearance. Isabel was at the piano, playing some brilliant waltzes, and madam drew near her guest, and under cover of the music said to him:

"You must have thought Beatrice's conduct was very strange, Mr. Raynor. But you don't know that incomprehensible girl so well as I do. She took an odd notion into her head that we were all leagued together here at Rosedale in order to persecute her, and so ran away. Very foolish of her, was it not?"

"Very, madam," he returned, briefly.

"And it was a wholly mistaken idea."

He turned at that and looked at her.

"I'm not sure," he said, politely. "I think it was this Mr. Rascaille whom she feared. If I mistake not you undertook a little match-making for the two."

Madam's face darkened.

"Did Beatrice tell you that?" she asked, sharply.

"I heard of it," he said, smiling blandly, and keeping his eyes bent upon her face while speaking. "It would be a very incongruous union. You had better give it up, madam. Besides, there is an obstacle in the way."

"An obstacle?" she echoed.

"That is what I said."

"Will you be good enough to tell me what it is?" she asked, with polished sarcasm.

"Certainly. I have met Mr. Rascaille before. If I am not mistaken he is already a married man."

Mrs. Ballantyne started out of her chair, a livid pallor overspread her face, and she caught her breath sharply.

"No, no," she cried, "you must be mistaken."

"Not in one thing—that he was married when I

knew him several years ago. But his wife may have died since then. I think it very probable, for he was said to treat her cruelly."

A lightning-like gleam came into madam's eyes. For a moment she glared about her like some wild animal at bay. Then her usually cool self-possession returned.

"If the wife of whom you speak is dead," said she, half scornfully, "no real impediment to the marriage exists after all."

"I have told you enough to prove that this man is no fitting husband for your step-daughter."

"Perhaps."

"Moreover, I know him to be exactly what his name would imply—a rascal!"

Mrs. Ballantyne shrugged her shoulders impatiently.

"Pray let us drop the subject, Mr. Raynor," she said, in her most dulcet tones. "I feel assured there is some mistake here, and that Mr. Rascaille is not the person you take him to be at all. You will be convinced of the fact yourself very soon, I have not the slightest doubt."

Then she leaned forward with her white hands folded in her lap, in the graceful pose of a person listening attentively.

"Was not that a beautiful strain, Mr. Raynor?" she murmured, rapturously watching Miss Lamont's fingers as they danced over the keys. "Isabel has a decided talent for music."

"And you have a decided talent for intrigue," thought Max, but he was too polite to say it.

He had witnessed quite enough to convince him of one thing—that Mrs. Ballantyne was a desperate and a wholly unprincipled woman.

"She is evidently in this Mr. Rascaille's power in some way," he decided, after long and anxious thought upon the subject. "I can't conceive how, but the fact is patent enough. Rascaille intends to take advantage of her fear, and butter his own bread while he can. This dear little Beatrice is an heiress in her own right, I understand. There lies the whole secret of his persecutions. But I'll baffle him yet."

He was smoking his cigar in the shrubbery next morning when he stumbled upon Beatrice sitting all by herself in an arbour and looking as if she hadn't a friend in the whole world.

She coloured up at sight of him, and held out one of her dimpled white hands. Raynor threw away his cigar, and sat down beside her. This meeting had come about exactly as he could have wished.

"I am afraid you are very unhappy," he said, gently.

She drew a long, sobbing breath, but did not reply. "Are you not rejoiced to be home again?" he persisted.

"I am rejoiced to see Ralph," she returned, evasively.

He glanced pityingly into her white face.

"I see very plainly how it is," he exclaimed; "you are afraid of Rascaille. Has he renewed his old persecutions?"

"No; but I am sure he is only waiting an opportunity."

"And Mrs. Ballantyne is still determined that you shall marry him?"

"She is. I heard her tell Isabel as so I was passing her door this morning."

Raynor clenched his teeth, and found some difficulty in refraining from clapping that poor, trembling figure to his heart.

"My poor child," he said, "take courage. That woman shall be foiled in her unnatural whim. Trust me for that. Ralph and I have pledged ourselves to help you, and I am sure we can do it."

"You are very kind," she said, beginning to sob.

"And I am going to be a very good friend to you. So take heart. I shall not rest until you are freed from this trial. It is not meet that youth should be groping in darkness and sorrow. A few more days, and you may hope to be free again, and your own happy self."

He said very much more to comfort her, and finally left her in quite a cheerful frame of mind.

A week wore on. Max Raynor kept his eyes and ears open. He could not afford to lose a single trick in the desperate game he was playing.

Of course he made some discoveries. In the first place, he became convinced of what he had only half suspected previously—namely, that Isabel Lamont, with madam's sanction and approval, was laying very earnest siege to his own heart—or rather to his bank stock.

He smiled quietly in his sleeve, and met her advances more than half way. He could safely do that, for he knew his own strength.

His second discovery was of far greater importance. By means of steady though covert watch which he kept upon Mrs. Ballantyne's movements he soon became aware that that lady was far more intimate with Mr. Rascaille than she had any right to be.

The two took long walks together at hours when they were not likely to be observed, and were often surprised in secret consultations.

As we have intimated, nothing of all this was lost upon Raynor.

"I know the two have some secret in common," he said to himself over and over again. "The moment that secret is discovered they are in my power, and poor Beatrice can defy them. I am sure of that!"

But how to discover it? There was the rub.

He was strolling by himself, very early one morning, when he came upon two figures in the shrubbery. It was Mrs. Ballantyne and Rascaille. High words had evidently passed between them, for madam looked flushed and angry, and Rascaille shook a folded paper in her face just as Raynor drew near, and cried, in a sneering tone of voice:

"Rave as you will, my lady, so long as I have this document in my possession I hold you in the hollow of my hand."

These words had barely passed his lips when he heard Raynor's step on the gravel path. He started and looked around. A sudden pallor overspread his face; he thrust the paper into his pocket and slunk away without uttering another word.

Mrs. Ballantyne's eyes gleamed like steel. Her face grew purple, and the nails cut deep into the very flesh of her clenched hand. But, making a violent effort, she almost immediately recovered her usual composure. She greeted Raynor with a charming smile.

"I did not know you were such an early riser," she said, sweetly.

"I am not—often."

"Ah?" giving him a swift glance. "I hope your ramble is nearly ended? I hope you are ready to escort me back to the house?"

"Quite ready, madam."

She took his arm.

"That tiresome Rascaille," she murmured as they strolled onward. "He and I are perpetually quarrelling. It's doubtful if we think alike on any one subject. This morning it was the proper soil for crocus bulbs. He insists on a sandy loam! The idea! What does a man know about flower-gardening?"

"What indeed?" chimed in Raynor, smiling to himself—not at the idea, but at madam's ready wit.

Later in the day he went with Ralph into the library for a confidential chat.

"You are quite willing I should speak freely concerning family affairs?" he began, abruptly.

"Certainly!" replied Ralph.

"Then, since madam is so partial to Rascaille, why doesn't she marry him herself, instead of forcing him upon poor Beatrice?"

The young man laughed.

"That matter can be readily explained," he said. "My father was peculiar in his notions. Although he married a second time himself, and a widow, he did not approve of that sort of thing. If my step-mother should marry a third time she would forfeit three-fourths of what was bequeathed to her."

"Ah?"

Raynor turned away his face, and remained thoughtfully silent for some minutes. When he did speak again it was on a wholly different subject.

"Rascaille carries about him a paper that I would give my right hand to possess," he muttered.

"Indeed," said Ralph.

"Yes."

The eyes of the two men met.

"The possession of that paper means freedom for Beatrice," Raynor whispered.

Ralph turned very pale.

"I know what you mean," he said, after a long pause, "and think it might be accomplished."

"How?"

"Rascaille keeps his valuables hidden at night under his pillow. I happened once to see him place them there."

"Does he look his door?"

"Yes. But there is a balcony outside the window. One could get in by means of that. Of course he sleeps with his window open such sultry nights as we are having now."

They looked at each other again.

"I am determined to get possession of that paper," said Raynor, slowly. "Can I count upon you?"

"Of course you can, if Beatrice's happiness can be gained so easily."

They made the attempt that very night, waiting until the house was perfectly still. Raynor, in his naked feet, posted himself outside Rascaille's bedroom door, while Ralph, who knew the way so much better, was to steal in at the window and unlock the door to his friend.

It was dreary waiting there, and Raynor's heart was in his mouth. But at last the key clicked noiselessly in the lock, the door swung open, and Ralph's hand grasped his own.

"All right so far, Max," whispered the young man. "Rascaille was accommodating enough to leave the key in the lock, or I might have been troubled to find it. I don't think we have disturbed him."

Now came the most difficult task of all—the withdrawing the coveted paper from under the sleeping man's pillow—and this was Raynor's part of the business.

He stole noiselessly into the room, and approached the bed. He had nearly reached it when the sleeper stirred. Only, breathed hard once or twice, and sat upright.

"Who's there?" he cried.

Raynor slid to the floor, and waited breathlessly. "Who's there?" repeated Rascaille. Then a pistol clicked sharply, and exploded the next instant—whether by accident or design Raynor never knew.

That pistol shot decided his course of action. He sprang to his feet, snatched the weapon from Rascaille's hand before the latter had any intimation of his design, and struck him a stunning blow over the head with the butt.

The villain fell backward, groaning heavily.

"Quick, Ralph," cried Raynor. "Bring a light from your room."

Ralph darted off, and Raynor thrust his hand under the pillow of the insensible man. When he withdrew it his fingers clasped a large morocco pocket-book.

"This must contain what I am after," he muttered.

He was right. When Ralph came hurrying in with the light, and he opened the pocket-book, almost the first object his eyes rested upon was the identical paper Rascaille had flattered so triumphantly in Mrs. Ballantyne's face.

It proved to be the marriage certificate of Jules Lamont and Martha Dempster, and was dated some twenty years back.

While Raynor stared at it a light broke suddenly upon his mind. He feverishly turned over the other contents of the pocket-book.

They were such as to convince him beyond a doubt that Mr. Rascaille and Jules Lamont were one and the same person. If so, and there had been no divorce, madam could not have been legally married to Ralph's father.

"That's it!" he cried, shouting for joy. "That's the secret of this Rascaille's power. I see it all now."

"What's the secret?" said Ralph, staring at him.

"What have you found in that pocket-book?" He was about to answer, but hurried footsteps were heard to approach. Of course the whole house had been alarmed by the pistol shot.

"Nobody must cross the threshold of this room," he exclaimed, excitedly.

He sprang to the door, and there met Mrs. Ballantyne face to face.

"Send the servants back to their beds again," he said, authoritatively. "Then I wish to see you alone in the library."

Something in his white, stern face caused the frightened woman to obey him without a word of questioning.

When he went downstairs presently, after having assured himself that Rascaille would soon recover from the blow he had dealt him, he found madam excitedly pacing the floor. He told her all.

The guilty creature denied nothing. She flung herself at his feet and begged for mercy.

"I thought Jules was dead when I married Beatrice's father!" she cried; "I did indeed. When he came here, and by-and-bye fell in love with Beatrice, and demanded her hand in marriage, I dared not refuse him."

That was her only plea.

Raynor said very little; but he insisted that Rascaille, alias Lamont, should be dismissed the house the first thing in the morning.

"He cannot harm you without compromising himself," Raynor said, the ludicrous side of the affair now coming uppermost; "he has been a too-much-married man himself for that."

Of course Rascaille stormed and raved on coming to himself, and learning the turn affairs had taken, he left the house soon after daylight, threatening the most terrible things. In less than an hour he was brought back a corpse. The horse on which he rode away had taken fright and thrown him. Over his dead body Raynor clasped hands with Mrs. Ballantyne.

"Heaven has ended this affair in its own way," he said, solemnly. "It is better so. I am not disposed to be hard with you. Show yourself truly sorry for the past, and anxious to do better in the future, and the secret of your life shall remain a secret between us."

Of course she was ready enough to promise all that. After the lapse of a few weeks she and Isabel quitted Rosedale for an extended Continental tour.

Neither Ralph nor Beatrice ever knew the real facts concerning her.



Raynor married Beatrice. So at last our gentle heroine was brought out of the darkness into the marvellous light of perfect love and happiness.

R. W.

### FACTIÆ.

**PSYCHOLOGICAL PHENOMENON.**—A lady wrote of her lover who had become insane that "he had gone out of his mind, but had never gone out of hers."—*Punch*.

**THE BOARDS.**—The old theatre at Harrow has been opened by the local School Board. Well, then, the local School Board has got a stage farther than the London School Board.—*Fun*.

**NAVAL NOTE.**—The "Dromedary," laden with Government stores, has run aground on the Isle of Wight. We wonder if this camel came to grief in trying to get through the Needles.—*Fun*.

**LOGIC FOR LADIES.**—It has been said by some wise person, and believed by many not otherwise, that it is in the power of any woman to make any man marry her she pleases. Very well; then do away with actions for breach of promise of marriage.—*Punch*.

**NO PULL.**—We can't for the life of us see why the papers are always announcing "Apothecaries' Hall." We know to our cost that apothecaries do haul if you go to them to have a fang pulled out. But why should the fact be constantly hung in our teeth?—*Fun*.

**UN FEU TROP FORT!**  
Ben to Carrie: "Oh, Carrie, what do you think?"  
Carrie: "Think what, dear? what do you mean?"  
Ben: "Papa took me to the theatre, last night—but he did not sit in the same pew as I did!"—*Fun*.

**WOMAN'S PENETRATION.**—A distinguished aeronaut states, as if it were something to wonder at, that a woman's voice may be heard at an altitude of two miles from the earth, while that of a man never reaches above a mile. Surely it isn't necessary to go up in a balloon to find out that women pitch their voices higher than men.

**SABBATH-BREAKING.**  
First Scot: "Who has been hitting Sandy Johnson? He has gotten a wain' black eye."  
Second Scot: "Ay, ay, young Aleck an' me saw him coming along the road on last Sabbath day, whistling as happy like as if it had been the middle of the week, so we just thrashed him well, but we did nae ken till after we had dun it that he was only whistlin' for his dog."—*Fun*.

**TRAGEDY AT THE COUNTER.**  
Customer (distinctly): "I want a pair of morning kid gloves—lavender—not stitched at the back. Size, eight and three-quarters."  
Shopman (as usual): "Sir?"  
Customer (sternly): "Did you hear what I said?"  
Shopman: "Pair of lavender gloves, plain, eight and three-quarters?"  
[Customer nods, and exit. May the lesson be blessed to shopmen.]—*Punch*.

**SOUNDINGS!**  
The living down at our village falling vacant, Lord Pavondale left it to the parish to choose the new rector.

**Influential Parishioner:** "Then am I to understand, Mr. Maniple, that you object to bury a Dissenter?"

**The Rev. Mr. Maniple (one of the competitors):** "Oh, dear me, no, Mr. Jinks; quite the contrary!"—*Punch*.

"IT IS A PRINCE, YOUR GRACE."  
[Nurse Lilly, correcting the Iron Duke.]  
"How is Mrs. Tomkins?"  
"Mrs. Montgomery Tomkins is as well as can be expected, ma'am."  
"And the little boy?"  
"The little boy, ma'am!"  
"Well, the little girl, then?"  
"The little girl, ma'am!"  
"Yes—one or the other, I suppose!"  
"The doctor said as a heir 'ad arrived, ma'am!"—*Punch*.

**CROSS PURPOSES.**—We learn that there is a proposal to start a crossing-sweeping brigade, and that it is suggested that at each crossing there is to be put up the following notice:—

This crossing has been placed under the care of an attendant, who is responsible for the due cleanliness of the same; and he is hereby authorized to make a charge of one penny for each person using or attempting to use the aforesaid crossing.

Now, considering the long struggle there has been to do away with turnpikes and bridge-tolls, this attempt to blackmail all who walk along our streets is a little too strong. It would cost about eighteen-pence at this rate to walk from Charing Cross to Temple Bar, so that a poor man would be compelled to take a cab.—*Fun*.

**OPERA DI CAMERA.**—There is a curious breach of promise case recorded as taking place at Pittsburg:—

The complainant alleges that the defendant fell so violently in love with her photograph that he "proposed," and was accepted, and she came "all the way from Ireland," to marry him. Arriving, she disenchanted him, and now has recourse to the law for redress.

An instance of "distance lens enchantment to the view"—and disenchantment is developed on a closer acquaintance! The lady is a positive, and her suitor is a negative; and we don't see how the matter is to be settled. Perhaps the simplest way would be to compel the flattering photographer who took the portrait to take the original too!—*Fun*.

### THE OLD CLOCK'S VOICE.

AGAINST the wall the old clock stands,  
Its hands are red with rust;  
And its pendulum aways through a dusky haze  
Of cobwebs robed in dust.

Over a hundred years ago,  
With measured swing and motion slow,  
This clock began to mark time's flow.

Many a one, in days gone by,  
Who gazed upon its face,  
Now sleeps where the breeze through the  
Tremulous trees

Makes musical the place;  
Yet, as if it were an immortal thing,  
The old clock still keeps up its swing,  
And counts the hours as they take wing.

Off in the stormy winter time,  
While gathered around the hearth,  
The young and the old, secure from the cold,  
Make most of the hour of mirth.  
Above the ringing laughter's chime  
Is heard the old clock's steady rhyme,  
Weaving the song of passing time.

And when the summer days come round,  
And the birds sing in the trees,  
While the breath of flowers, called forth by  
showers,

Sweeten the kind South breeze,  
Mingled with sound of bird and bee,  
And cheery laughter of infancy,  
The old clock's voice sings merrily.

All seasons through that voice is heard,  
Through fortune and through ill,  
Whether fate be fair, or the dregs of care  
Life's fullest measure fill.

To note the moments as they fly,  
The hours that come, the hours that die,  
The old clock stands there faithfully.

C. D.

### GEMS.

There is a travelling thief, ever stealing, yet no man can catch him.

As a person's yes and no, so is all his character. A downright yes and no marks the firm, a quick the rapid, and a slow a cautious and timid character.

A desire to say things which no one ever said makes some people say things which nobody ought to say.

**FRETTING.**—This is a very profitless habit. A smile is a better antidote to cure than a snarl. The Psalmist says, "Fret not thyself," and it is golden advice for every one.

EVERY young man should remember that the world will always honour industry. The vulgar and useless idler, whose energies of body and mind are rusting for want of occupation, may look with scorn upon the labourer engaged at his toil; but his scorn is praise, his contempt honour.

No man's spirits were ever hurt by doing his duty. On the contrary, one good action, one temptation resisted and overcome, one sacrifice of desire or interest, purely for conscience' sake will prove a cordial for weak and low spirits beyond what either indulgence, or diversion, or company can do for him.

### HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

**STICKING PLAISTERS.**—Ordinary sticking plaster is made by boiling oxide of lead (litharge), olive oil, and water together to a proper consistency, and then spread on calico. Court plaster is made by brushing a solution of isinglass over silk.

**PRESERVING POTATOES.**—To preserve potatoes in a proper state for food for many years it is only necessary to scald them, or subject them to a heated oven for a few minutes. By doing this they will never sprout, and the farinaceous substance will keep good for many years, provided the cortical part (the skin) be entire. They should be well dried after being scalded.

**LIQUID GLUE.**—An excellent liquid glue is made

by dissolving glue in nitric ether. The ether will only dissolve a certain amount of glue, consequently the solution cannot be made too thick. The glue thus made is about the consistency of molasses, and is doubly as tenacious as that made with hot water. If a few bits of india-rubber, cut into scraps the size of a buck-shot, be added, and the solution allowed to stand a few days, being stirred frequently, it will be all the better, and will resist the dampness twice as well as glue made with water.

### STATISTICS.

**A STRONG "INTEREST."**—In the financial year 1870-71 no less than 347,723 Excise licences were granted to dealers in and retailers of excisable liquors used as beverages in the United Kingdom; the amount of duty charged was 1,297,541*l*. The number was made up as follows:—To publicans there were granted 87,362 licences for retailing beer, 97,252 for retailing spirits, 46,379 for retailing wine, and 24,625 occasional licences. There were 47,555 licences granted to beer-shop-keepers; 4,892 licences to retailers of wine to be consumed off the premises, and 3,207 to retailers of wine in refreshment houses; 399 licences for retailing beer, &c., in packet boats; and 500 spirit licences to grocers in Ireland. There were 6,698 licences granted to dealers in beer, and 4,092 additional licences to retail; 6,561 licences to dealers in spirits, and 3,546 additional licences to retail; and 4,331 licences to dealers in wine. There were 122 licences to makers and dealers in "sweets," and 10,392 licences to retailers. There were also granted 32,707 licences to brewers, 5,323 to maltsters, 312 to distillers and rectifiers, and 6,501 to refreshment houses.

### MISCELLANEOUS.

The people of Scotland don't thank Mr. Lowe for taking the duty off coffee; it won't benefit their end of the island, where the staple breakfast is oatmeal porridge and buttermilk, the *beau-ideal* of a free breakfast-table.

**SUGAR USED IN BREWERIES.**—It appears from official returns that in the year ending the 30th September, 1871, the quantity of sugar consumed in breweries in London was 11,991,690 lb.; in the English provinces 17,288,599 lb.; in Scotland, 508,472 lb.; in Ireland, 2,712,102 lb.; making a total of 32,500,763 lb.; being more by 8,483,592 lb. than in the preceding year. The increase in the English provinces exceeded 2,800,000 lb.

**THE REV. R. MOFFATT AND THE QUEEN.**—While the Queen was at Gosport, en route for Windsor, the Rev. Robert Moffatt was presented to Her Majesty by Colonel Ponsonby, Egerbury in Waiting. The Queen graciously received the celebrated missionary, evinced much interest in the work in which he has for so many years been engaged in South Africa, and asked several questions with reference to his son-in-law (Dr. Livingstone). In the course of an address in the Independent Chapel in the evening Mr. Moffatt expressed his gratification at having seen Her Majesty for the first time in his life, and at having spoken to her.

**BRINGING IT HOME.**—The magistrates of a north Royal burgh were lately waited upon by a deputation of "clergymen of different denominations" for the purpose of praying them to restrict the number of certificates for public-houses, as such houses had a very demoralizing effect on the population. A far-seeing Aberdonian, replying to the spokesman, said, "Fat de ye mean, man? If it worna public-houses we wad hae nae need ava fur nather the police nor the ministers. Ye're taken a stick to braak yer ain head." The members of the deputation, although not quite satisfied with their reception, retired in the conviction, as one of them expressed, "That there was a good deal of truth in the bailie's remarks."

**THE LATE EARL OF LONSDALE.**—The Earl of Lonsdale was a great collector of rare china and objects of vertu. It has been already stated that on the afternoon of the day on which he died he drove to Christy and Manson's, the well-known auctioneers in King Street, St. James's, to inspect three small Sévres vases, which were to be sold that day. They were brought to the carriage to him to inspect, and he said he would like to have them. They are vases about fourteen inches high, and the auctioneers valued them at one thousand guineas! So exquisite, however, is their shape and workmanship that other bidders were found besides the Earl of Lonsdale, and after a spirited competition they were purchased by his lordship's broker for eleven hundred and fifty guineas! When brought home next morning their purchaser was no more. The deceased earl died, not, as was reported, in his arm-chair after dinner, but in his bed, ten minutes after he had retired to rest.

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## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

A. W.—We have no farther information on the subject.

ANNIE G.—The colour of the hair is auburn of a somewhat fierce shade.

E. A.—We do not just now remember anything about the tale inquired for.

BEU.—Upon reflection you will probably find it prudent to postpone any active measures for a year or so.

F. A. P.—Some months must elapse before we shall be in a position to form any judgment on the subject.

R. D. B. (Whithorn, Wigtonshire, N.B.)—In Vol. IV., Part No. 89, for October, 1870.

C. J. S.—In speaking of Coventry it is perfectly correct to call it a city.

B. B. M. and G. B. F.—The lines are very carelessly copied, apparently from some published work or piece of music.

CHARLES I. W.—A detailed account of your personal qualifications is more necessary than a description of your place of birth.

CLARA.—We are unable to accommodate you by reprinting in this place the words of an old song. You should ask a music-seller to procure them for you.

E. A. M.—The letter is deficient in almost every necessary particular upon which information is required, and both handwriting and orthography are very bad.

NANCY.—The spots are often removed by the application of a suitable lotion to be obtained from a chemist. Fresh air and out-door exercise are beneficial to the complexion.

MISS JONES.—The letter is without doubt very decided; if it had been equally instructive it might have met with the attention you desired it to receive, but which, under the circumstances, would be useless.

CATHERINE.—Just at present we are unusually well supplied with such matters, and are sorry if we disappoint you by saying that we are not likely to have room for some time to come, unless any exceptional or unforeseen circumstances arise.

C. S.—1. Perhaps the age is not too young for a lady.

2. Marriages contracted before the registrar are legal.

3. Cymbeline is the name of a man; you will find in Shakespeare's play that he is styled King of Britain, the principal female character being named Imogen, daughter of Cymbeline.

MARIA.—The practice of introducing female performers on the stage is of comparatively modern date. It appears that the queen of James the First took part in a pastoral drama, but we believe that not until the time of Charles the Second was it usual for actresses to appear upon the boards of the British theatres.

LIZIE J. and SARAH ANN W. (Doncaster).—The handwriting and orthography are so bad that it is troublesome in a more than ordinary way to give effect to what you appear to desire. Surely with care you could make some alteration for the better in the above attainments, which if allowed to remain unimproved may seriously affect your prospects in life.

ALBERT J. G. and LOVING CHARLES.—As you seem to indicate that the two young ladies have only excited sufficient interest in your minds to induce you to bestow a half-sheet of note paper upon yourselves and them you must not be surprised if they consider your practices and professions at variance. Straws show which way the wind blows, and trifles often militate against a would-be lover's suit.

G. N. F. (Maidstone).—Such a will if proved would probably be found in that district registry of the Court of Probate where the testator died; if not search can be made in the chief office in London. The fee for search and perusal is small; the fee for an office copy depends on the length of the document. Such a promise as you refer to cannot be legally enforced; if to the illegitimate child no bequest is made in the will he can have no claim.

J. GILES.—We should say it is superstitious to suppose that "Adder Stones" have any connection with the reptile whose name they bear. A better account of the origin of these opaque and thick-bordered rings of glass, occasionally found in country places, is that they are the remains of ornaments made and esteemed by our forefathers. These stones are sometimes finely variegated, and are regarded as proofs that the ancient inhabitants of this country were acquainted with the art of making glass.

JUNIOR (Dublin).—Sir Walter Scott is the author of lines similar to those about which you inquire. The

closing words of the second stanza of the third Canto of "The Lay of the Last Minstrel" read thus:

"Love rules the court, the camp, the grove,  
And men below, and saints above;  
For love is heaven, and heaven is love."

From which it appears that you have misquoted the first line, and altogether omitted the second.

SARAH O.—There is but little music in your verses on Happiness; even the usual rattling of syllables pinned at the termination of the lines is often wanting. The poem, as you style it, is characterized by a vague sentimentalism which was once in fashion, but which has long since given place to more earnest because more definite thoughts. Philosophers have indeed debated concerning what constitutes the chief felicity of man, and have sometimes left the subject involved in a certain obscurity; but

"As imagination bodies forth  
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen  
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing  
A local habitation and a name."

In illustration of which it may be remarked that though a renowned poet commences one of his epistles with the exordium:

"Oh, Happiness! our being's end and aim!  
Good, Pleasure, Ease, Content—whatever thy  
name;  
That something still which prompts th' eternal  
sigh  
For which we bear to live or dare to die,"

he yet labours after a definition through some four hundred lines, arriving at the conclusion that

"Virtue alone is Happiness below,"

because that is a possession

"Where no wants, no wishes can remain,  
Since but to wish more Virtue is to gain."

In the aspirations you have uttered on behalf of your friend you leave him in the dark as to the sort of boon you desire he should possess; this omission is one of the many grave defects in your attempt at composition.

## POWER AND LOVE.

The mighty catenets down the steep

Resistlessly are flowing,

Yet round their sides are gentle flowers,

And o'er them rainbows glowing—

While for beneficence to lands  
Below their waters going.

Oh, mighty souls whose powers rush  
For good to man for ever,

Why should not your grand missions too,  
That from love cannot sever,

Keep all its symbols round and on  
Your torrents of will flowing

With Heaven's own blessing unto hearts  
Of millions broadly going?

Oh, let the gentlest flowers smile!  
Oh, let the rainbows sparkle!

The sun of light serene on high,  
And tempest never darkle!

So will your missions all men bless,  
Their vastness never frighten,

But from your waters of white Truth  
All spirit-gardens brighten.

W. R. W.

ELLEN F.—It is desirable that the three friends should each write separate notes, and be a little more careful in the descriptions given; in the letter before us the age in two instances has been omitted. We have no wish to controvert those modern lines:

"But wherefore one's age be revealing?  
Leave that to the registry books;  
A man is as old as he's feeling,  
A woman as old as she looks."

Still in the absence of "looks" something must be given as a guide to the opinion you wish the opposite sex to entertain of your appearance.

WILLIAM S. C., twenty-five, 5ft. 10in., and fond of home. Respondent must be about twenty, handsome, and make a good wife.

HELENA, twenty-one, tall, and domesticated. Respondent must be about twenty-seven, good looking, and fond of home.

LAURESTINA, twenty-one, 5ft. 4in., good looking, and genteel. Respondent must be tall, dark, loving, and a sailor.

MAY, nineteen, tall, fair, would make a good wife, fond of home. Respondent must be about twenty-one, a tradesman preferred.

MARTICA, twenty, 5ft. 2in., dark auburn hair, dark eyes, good tempered. Respondent must be dark, and about twenty-one, a tradesman preferred.

O. N. E., eighteen, handsome, fair, and musical, wishes to marry a gentleman who is tall, handsome, dark, and a musician.

ALICE, twenty, tall, dark, good looking, and loving. Respondent must be tall, fair, and loving; a tradesman preferred.

CAROLINE C., twenty-two, 5ft. 4in., and fond of home. Respondent must be about twenty-six, fair, and have a little income.

KITT S., twenty-one, tall, brown hair and eyes, very good looking, a tradesman's daughter, loving disposition. Respondent must be tall and dark; a mechanic preferred.

BONA FIDE, twenty-four, medium height, good looking, a farmer's son with 500L. Respondent must be good looking, and have the same money, as "Bona Fide" wants to start in a good farm; a farmer's daughter preferred.

CLAUDE MELVILLE, twenty-five, would like to correspond with a young lady with a view to marriage. Has a good place and could keep a wife comfortably; is considered handsome.

E. F., thirty-one, good looking, medium height, fair, steady, has a good business, clearing 250L. a year. Respondent must be a young lady of means, affectionate, and fond of business.

C. H. R. (Liverpool), fair, 5ft. 10in., considered good looking, in business for himself in the shipping trade, good prospects, wishes to marry a lady from twenty to twenty-five who is a Protestant.

SUSIE B., twenty-two, short, a domestic servant, fair, blue eyes, can wash a shirt and cook a dinner. Respondent must be dark, about twenty-four, steady, loving, fond of home, and a respectable mechanic.

D. W., twenty-eight, 5ft. 8in., good looking, light whiskers, dark brown hair, could support and love a good wife. Respondent must be about twenty-five, good looking, industrious, and a native of South Wales.

CYMBELINE'S SISTERS, nineteen, educated, and pretty, would like to marry a handsome young man; she is of fair complexion, has dark curly hair, gray eyes, good figure, and a little money.

VICTOR and RUPERT. "Victor," twenty-four, 5ft. 6in., fair, light hair, gray eyes, and fond of home. "Rupert," twenty-one, 5ft. 5in., dark hair and eyes, good looking, and would make a good husband. Respondents must be good looking.

ALBERT C., twenty-three, stoker in the Royal Navy, tall, fair, good looking, steady, and loving. Respondent must be from nineteen to twenty-two, fair, loving, and fond of children.

F. O. M. D., twenty-seven, tall, fair, and good looking, would like to marry a young lady, fair complexion, good looking, with an amiable temper; he is in a good position, and able to keep a wife comfortably, in or near the town of Aberdeen.

TWO COUNTRY LASSES, Sisters. "Carrie," twenty-four, "Lillie," twenty, both medium height, nice looking, fair, blue eyes, domesticated, amiable, musical, and affectionate. Respondents must be rather tall, dark, gentlemanly, good looking, fond of home, good tempered, and of a suitable age; clerks, with a good income, and living in or near London preferred.

CHARLEY and WALTER. "Charley," twenty-two, 5ft. 6in., dark, handsome, fond of home and music, can sing very well, has a good income and expectations. Respondent must be about twenty, rather tall, dark, fond of home and children, one with a small income preferred.

"Walter," twenty, 5ft. 7in., dark, good looking, fond of home and music. Respondent must be about eighteen, tall, a brunette, and have a good taste for music.

## COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

ROWLAND is responded to by—"Emily," medium height, domesticated, good looking, fond of home, would make a good wife.

ANNIE by—"Robert M.," of a loving nature, and a sergeant in one of Her Majesty's favourite regiments.

S. C. W. by—"Louise M.," nineteen, tall, fair, good looking, well educated, and very respectable, but if money is an object she has none.

WILLIAM A. C. by—"M. B.," tall, fair, of a loving disposition, and would try her utmost to make "William A. C.'s" home comfortable.

FRITZ by—"Lizzie L.," she is twenty-seven, rather tall, domesticated, loving, and very fond of music and children.

MARGARET by—"De S.," twenty, a commercial traveller, tall, fair, curly hair, and will have money at a death.

JANE S. by—"A. B.," thirty, 5ft. 8in., fair complexion, loving, and fond of home, income limited but has expectations.

JOHN M. C. R. by—"Alice," twenty-one, 5ft. 9in., dark hair and eyes, good figure, nice looking, domesticated, industrious, and fond of children.

PALLION by—"A Widow," who would make a kind mother to his little boy, she is holding a situation as housekeeper, but would like to have a home again, she has some means and plenty of talent.

JANE S. by—"Yorkshire," twenty-eight, 5ft. 7in., fair, affectionate, and fond of home, having a good income and business of his own, "Yorkshire" wishes for an intelligent, loving wife to make his home happy.

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